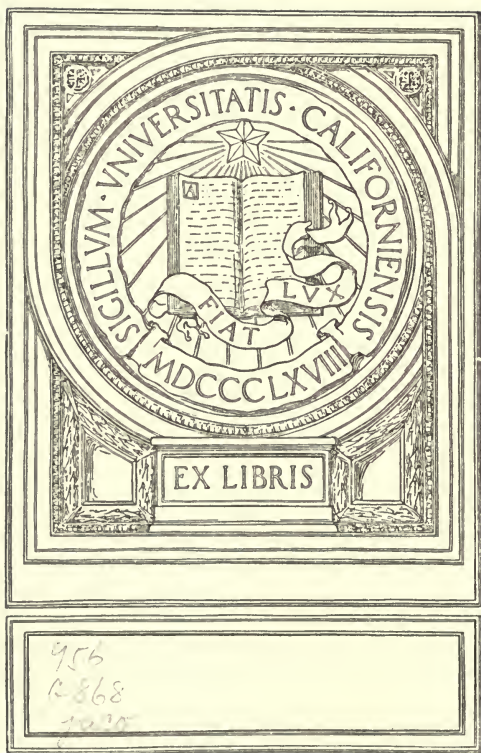


JACK THE YOUNG COWBOY



GEORGE BIRD GRINNELL



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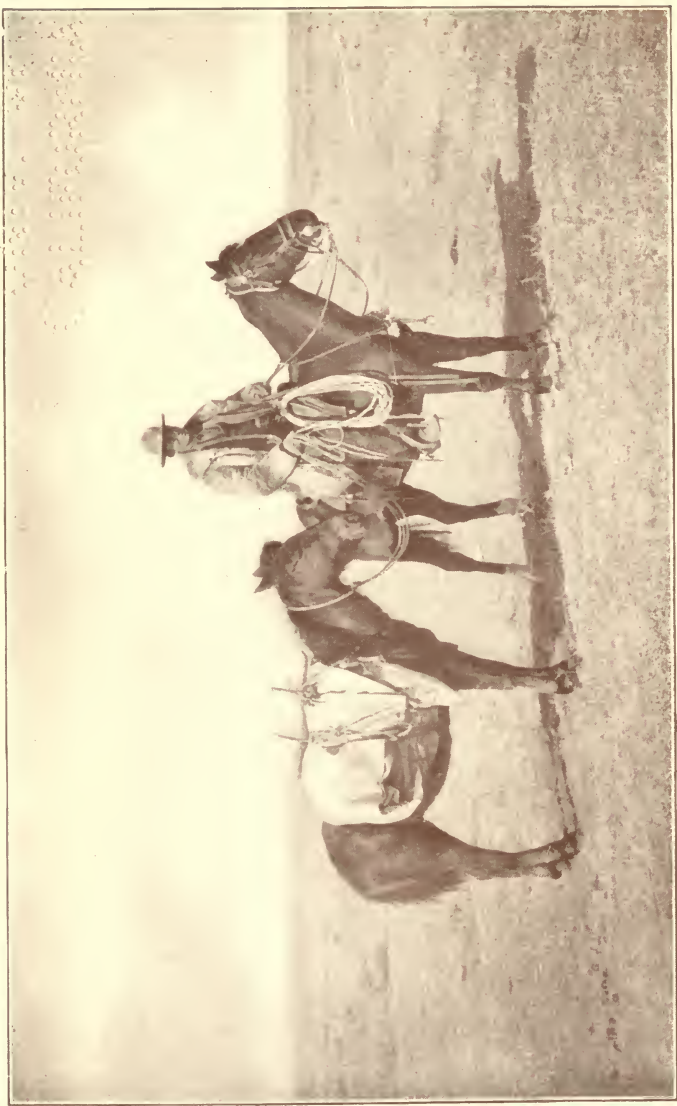
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JACK
THE YOUNG COWBOY

By the same Author

JACK THE YOUNG COWBOY
JACK THE YOUNG TRAPPER
JACK THE YOUNG CANOEMAN
JACK THE YOUNG EXPLORER
JACK IN THE ROCKIES
JACK AMONG THE INDIANS
JACK THE YOUNG RANCHMAN
PAWNEE HERO STORIES AND FOLK
TALES
BLACKFOOT LODGE TALES
THE STORY OF THE INDIAN
THE INDIANS OF TO-DAY
THE PUNISHMENT OF THE STINGY
AMERICAN DUCK SHOOTING
AMERICAN GAME BIRD SHOOTING
TRAILS OF THE PATHFINDERS



COWBOY STARTING FOR THE ROUND-UP CAMP.

Photo. by the Morris Art Studio, Chinook, Mont.

JACK

THE YOUNG COWBOY

*An Eastern Boy's Experience on a
Western Round-up*

BY
GEORGE BIRD GRINNELL

WITH FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

THE
LIBRARY OF
CALIFORNIA



NEW YORK
FREDERICK A. STOKES COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

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Ninth Printing, August 12, 1935

NO. 1011
1935

Printed in the United States of America

INTRODUCTION

Jack's cowboy life began just as a great change was sweeping over the cattle range. Cattle had first been brought into the country only a few years before — old-fashioned long-horns driven up over the trail from Texas.

In those days the people in the West were not many. Towns were small, farms almost unknown, wagon roads few. Except about the pastures of the larger ranches, there were no fences. Over most of the land the cowboy roamed alone.

His seemed a life of romance. Free as the birds, he wandered over the wide range, going when and where he pleased. But this romance was only apparent. No man worked harder than he, or for less reward. His toilsome days and short broken nights; his small pay and his poor food were recorded in the songs that he sang as he rode about the cattle. This was in the early days of the cattle industry.

A little later, on the plains came a change from pioneer conditions to those approaching luxury.

The earlier cattlemen in the North — those who ranged their stock on the Platte and the various forks of the Loup River — made great profits. Yet as time went on they saw competition constantly growing sharper and ranges being overstocked. As the news of their profits drifted eastward many young men, allured by the romance of the cowboy's life, and igno-

INTRODUCTION

rant of its actual conditions, came into the cattle country. These believed that success with cattle was to be attained by riding about and watching the cattle increase and grow, and shipping them to market when they had grown. They were glad to be interested in a business at once so agreeable and so profitable; and many a one exchanged his money for a herd, a brand and some log buildings, and rode over the range awaiting the advent of his riches. Many of the early cattlemen sold their herds to the newcomers, who, somewhat later, discovered that with the cattle they had bought also much experience.

These changes were in operation when Jack entered on his cowboy life.

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JACK, THE YOUNG COWBOY

CHAPTER I

THE TRAGEDY AT POWELL'S

"WELL, Jack," said Mr. Sturgis, "I do not know where you'll find them, but possibly somewhere over on the Little Medicine. If I were you, I'd ride over to Powell's. They are sure to know where the outfit is, and if you can't reach camp to-night, you can stop at Powell's."

"All right, Uncle Will; I'll go over there and probably get to camp to-night."

Jack shook hands with his uncle, and stepping back to his horse threw the reins over Pawnee's head, and swung into the saddle. With a final wave of his hand, he trotted off toward where his string of horses were feeding on the meadow before the house, and riding to and fro behind the scattered bunch, gathered them together and started on down the road.

Mr. Sturgis stood in front of the corral filling his pipe, and watching his nephew grow smaller and smaller, as he moved along down the road close to the pasture fence. It seemed to him a long time since he had first brought Jack out from far New York to the Swift Water Ranch, a little slip of a lad, thin and pale. He remembered their first drive from the

railroad: how he had killed a bear crossing the road, and how Jack had seen what he supposed to be an Indian dog, which, of course, was a coyote.

“My!” said Mr. Sturgis to himself, “certainly the years slip by! Then I could have lifted that little fellow and held him out with one hand; and now he is big enough to lift me!”

Jack had risen that morning soon after daylight, and had gone out to get his horses together. The night before, Joe had brought in and put in the small pasture the few saddle horses left at the ranch. That morning they had been driven into the corral, and Jack, aided by Joe’s knowledge of the animals, had selected six for his string to ride on the round-up, taking along his old favorite Pawnee for a regular riding horse, but not for a cow horse. Good saddle animal as Pawnee was, Jack thought too much of him to be willing to use him in the long rough work of riding circle or branding calves, or throwing big cows, if any old mavericks should be found. For the most part Pawnee should travel in the *cávaya*,* though sometimes he might be used on night herd. Jack made up his mind that hard work Pawnee should not do. “Give him just enough exercise to make him enjoy his victuals,” Joe had said that morning when they were talking the string over.

The horses had been brought into the corral, and one after another of those chosen had been cut out and sent out through the big gate, all except the one that was to carry Jack’s bed. That one had been roped and taken out and tied up to the fence. Then Jack had gone up to the house and brought down his

* *Cávaya* from the Spanish word *caballada*, the horse herd.

blankets and a few extra clothes, and having wrapped them up in his "tarp," the bundle had been put on the horse with the regular cowboy hitch, and the animal had been set free to feed with its fellows. Then had come breakfast, and he was ready.

It was nearly a year since Jack had crossed a horse, and it seemed very pleasant to be trotting along over the prairie, the bunch going nicely ahead of him. They were fat and frisky and every now and then one of them would lay back his ears and nip at his neighbor, and perhaps the sudden motion would start the little bunch into a gallop, from which they would almost at once come down again to the steady trot.

There had been rain enough — so they said at the ranch — during April, May and the first few days of June, but now the prairie was dry and a little cloud of dust rose from under the horses' hoofs. The bottoms and the high hills were brightly green. Moreover, they were dotted with many beautiful flowers — which of course Jack could not see, because he was moving along swiftly — and down on one of the wet meadows the purple iris, already in bloom, had colored the ground blue in spots.

It was a couple of years now since Jack had been to the ranch, and a good many things had happened; for when a boy is from seventeen to nineteen years of age, things are likely to happen to him pretty fast. He receives many new impressions, has new experiences, and certainly picks up knowledge of one sort or another at a rapid rate. Since Jack had last seen these prairies and mountains he had passed his examinations, entered college, and spent nearly two years there. He had certainly had a good time while

he was in New Haven. The toughness and endurance that he had picked up during his summers on the plains and in the mountains had stood him in good stead in athletics and he had won a place on one of the football teams. During a part of his sophomore year, he had had the bad fortune to have a long and tiresome illness from which he was only now convalescing, and since he had lost much time, it had been thought best for him to go out to his uncle's ranch before the end of the college year and to spend the vacation there in getting well.

When he reached the Swift Water Ranch two days before, the round-up had already started and now was in full swing; and Mr. Sturgis, after satisfying himself that Jack was strong enough to do the work, had told him that the best thing for him would be to go out and find the round-up, and work with it. Nothing could have suited Jack better. Hugh was along as a sort of camp-keeper. Mr. Powell and Charley Powell were sure to be there, and so were half a dozen other men whom Jack knew very well, and with whom he would be glad to work. He felt that he was going to have a good time. In fact, he was having a good time now. The air was fresh and cool, the sun bright; far off on the green hills he could see here and there a little white speck which he knew was an antelope; from the fence posts along which he passed sounded the clear whistle of the western meadow lark; and everywhere the air was full of sweet songs of birds, though of them all the meadow lark's was the loudest and clearest.

Jack's outfit was that commonly used by the cow puncher. He wore a flannel shirt and woolen

trousers, gloves, and shaps — heavy leather trousers without any seat, to protect the legs when riding through underbrush or thorns. About his waist was his pistol-belt filled with cartridges, while the six-shooter hung well down on his right hip.

It must not be supposed that Jack carried a gun with any purpose of using it against his fellow men, but in those old days of wild prairie and wild cattle a pistol was almost a necessity. While sometimes it was used to kill game, or perhaps against dangerous animals, it often came in play to frighten an angry cow, or to turn a bunch of stampeding cattle.

Before long Jack had left behind him the pasture fence, and when he looked back could no longer see the ranch buildings which, low themselves, and placed in a sheltered hollow, were now cut off by the points of the rounded hills. His course lay southeast across the basin. Now and then the horses, uncertain as to the direction they should take, veered to one side or the other, so that the driver had to ride out on the side toward which they turned and shout at them to head them back.

The miles passed quickly. Occasionally, on some nearby hill Jack saw a little bunch of antelopes — old males with long black horns, and yearlings, both males and females. They looked at him as he drew near, and if he approached too close, ran up to the top of some rise and watched him long after he had passed.

It was after he had crossed the valley, and was riding up through the low foot-hills that stretched out from the bluffs on the other side, that an old doe antelope burst suddenly from a little coulée close to

the bunch of horses, and passing in front of them galloped up the hill on the other side. Almost immediately behind her was a coyote running hard. When it saw the horses it checked itself, and an instant later as it saw the rider, turned and ran. The old doe had done her best, but except for the incident of the horses' being there, she would soon have been pulled down. Her black tongue hung far out of her mouth, and she staggered as she ran.

Jack understood very well what was happening. Evidently two or more coyotes had started this doe, and were taking turns chasing her, one relieving the other which, by cutting off the corners, could save itself, and after it had regained its wind, take up the chase again. So the race might have kept up for an hour or more, until finally, the old doe would have been overtaken, pulled down, and devoured.

To Jack all this was a matter of common knowledge, for more than once he had seen almost that very thing happen. It took him only a moment, therefore, to whirl his horse. Giving him a jab with the spurs, he was close upon the coyote almost before it had started to run. He had jerked out his six-shooter, and as two or three balls knocked up puffs of dust about the coyote, the beast put on a tremendous spurt of speed. It was impossible to take aim from the back of the galloping horse, but one ball passing over the coyote's head caused it to whirl and run broadside for a jump or two, and as it did this, it came in collision with another ball, which quickly ended its career.

"Good enough!" said Jack to himself. "That is better luck than I deserved. I didn't hope to do more than scare the beast, and now I have got it."

He rode over and sat on his horse looking down at the coyote, from whose hide great patches of fur had been lost, for the animals were now just shedding their winter coats. Evidently the hide was not worth taking off, and so Jack dismounted and cut off the coyote's head, for in those days there was a bounty on these beasts, and the bounty was worth having. He tied the head to the saddle, remounted, and started down toward his horses. They had stopped and were now feeding, but before long he had them moving again.

Riding steadily and fast across the plateau, he saw to his left something moving, and watching it for a few moments saw that it was a badger digging its hole. Every now and then the badger would sit up and look about him, and then again would put its forefeet on the ground and begin to dig. When he had got as close to the badger as the trail would bring him, Jack suddenly turned Pawnee and galloped toward the creature at a good rate. The badger at once noticed the change of direction, and set to work digging harder. By the time Jack had reached the hole, the animal was already twelve or fifteen inches under ground, and was quite covered by the loosened earth of the hole. For a moment Jack was going to shoot down through the earth, which was heaving and moving from the struggles of the beast below, but then it occurred to him that there was no especial reason for doing this, since the badger could not be used in any way. Its hide would be useless, and there was no reason for killing it. Moreover, badgers kill a good many prairie dogs which eat grass, and gophers which destroy gardens, and every badger killed means

an increase in the dog and gopher population. There came to him, too, the memory of what Hugh more than once had said to him — that there was no sense in killing things unless you could make some use of them. He watched the moving earth for two or three minutes. If he had had a stick he would have poked it down in the hole, to feel the badger, but he had seen too many badgers to be willing to put his hand down in this hole, even though the hand were protected by a stout glove.

Presently he was on his horse again, and the bunch was once more started on the road toward Powell's ranch. The horses, which had been going all day, were now very willing to stop, and were eager at any moment to get a bite of grass. Jack kept them to their work, however, and a little later, when he came to the edge of the plateau, he was glad to see the valley below him and Powell's ranch buildings in the distance. He rode down toward the houses, following the little sag; but as he went down the hill the Powell buildings were no longer in sight, for they were hidden by the ridges on either side the road.

At the Powell ranch it was long after noon; dinner was over; the dishes had been put away and Mrs. Powell and Bess were sewing in the living-room. All the men had gone off on the round-up, and these two were left here alone, as so often they had been left alone before. Presently Bess glanced through one of the windows which looked over the road leading from the valley.

“Here come some people — a couple of men and a pack horse,” she said to her mother.

A little later the riders drew up in front of the house, and one of them dismounting came to the kitchen door and knocked. Bess went to the door and saw there a tall, spare, middle-aged man. There was nothing especially noticeable about him except that he had rather keen, fierce eyes, a hooked nose, and a black, drooping mustache. As she opened the door he nodded and said to her:

“How do you do, ma’am? We men are traveling south to go to the railroad. We’ve got to get to Cheyenne. We’ve come quite a way from the north, and we’ve run plumb out of grub. We haven’t any money, more’n just enough for our tickets, and I was wondering if you would give us a meal. If we can get something to eat, we can go in comfortably to town and catch the east-bound passenger to-night.”

“Why, certainly!” said Bess. “We’ll be glad to give you something to eat. Tie up your horses and come in and sit down. It won’t take long to get you some dinner.”

Leaving the door open, she went back to her mother and told her what the riders wanted, and the two women went into the kitchen and began to start the fire and to prepare a meal. Meantime the men tied up their horses and seated themselves just outside the kitchen door. Mrs. Powell asked once if they would not come in, and sit in the living-room, but they said no, they were comfortable there.

Presently dinner was ready and the men, called in, ate hungrily of bacon, potatoes and bread and butter, and seemed especially to enjoy the coffee. The young man had nothing to say; but the older one, after he had satisfied his hunger, talked a little about matters

up north, told of things that were happening at Buffalo, and spoke of having passed a round-up camp early that morning.

“That’s where our men folks are,” said Mrs. Powell. “They’re all off riding the country, and won’t be back until the round-up is over.”

When the men had finished their meal, the older one thanked Mrs. Powell; and going outside, the two sat down by the door and lighting their pipes talked in low tones. Mrs. Powell and Bess cleared off the table, washed and put away the dishes, and returned to the living-room.

Presently the older of the two men rose to his feet and said to the younger:

“Come on, now! We may as well try it! It’ll be a big help to us if we can get a little money; and we can get on the train, and be well out of the country before anybody knows anything about it.”

“Aw, Bill, don’t do it,” said the younger man; “these people have been good to us. It’ll be mighty mean to frighten ’em, or take anything from ’em.”

“Hold your yawp!” growled the man called Bill. “If they’ve got anything, I’m going to have it; and you’ve got to back me up and stand half the blame!” He rested his hands on his hips, and looked fiercely at his companion, who dolefully got up on his feet and followed Bill into the house. At the door of the living-room Bill stopped.

“I told you, ma’am,” he said, “that we’re going to the railroad, and that we’re going to Cheyenne, but we ain’t got any money to pay the railroad fares, and I thought I’d ask you if you wouldn’t give us what we need?”

"Is the man crazy!" cried Mrs. Powell, angrily. "I'm not a bank; and if you've been any time in this country you must know that people on ranches don't keep money. What would we spend money for here?"

"I reckon that's so, ma'am," said Bill; "but I reckon too that your man didn't go away and leave you without a cent, and whatever you've got, I'll take, and take it quick!"

He stepped into the room toward Mrs. Powell, and she saw at once that the man meant what he said and that asking for money was no longer a request but a demand.

"Honestly," she protested, "I have no money. When Mr. Powell went away he didn't expect us to leave the ranch, and he knew we didn't need any money here. You'll have to try to borrow some in town when you get to the railroad."

"Well," said the man, "if you haven't any money you've got a watch there, and I'll take that, and maybe when I get to town I can borrow two or three dollars on it."

He stepped forward and reached out to take from her belt a little watch whose ring he could see above her apron strings; but Mrs. Powell drew back.

"You shan't have that watch!" she cried. "I've had that ever since I was married, and I won't give it to you!"

The man caught her arm with his left hand and reached for the watch with his right hand; and Mrs. Powell screamed.

"Hold on!" said Bessie. "Let go my mother! I've got some money, and I'll give it to you."

“You’ve got some money, have you?” said Bill, releasing Mrs. Powell’s arm.

“Yes; I have twenty-two dollars I was saving up to buy a saddle, and if you will clear out right off, I’ll give it to you.”

“All right,” agreed Bill. “We’ll go. Let’s have it. But don’t try to play any tricks, young woman.”

“I’ll get it for you right away,” Bessie said; “it’s here in my bedroom.”

“All right,” repeated Bill. “Be quick about it!”

Bessie ran into the bedroom and was heard to pull open a drawer, and a few seconds later a shot sounded. Bill staggered a little, felt for his pistol, and then turned around and fell to the floor; while the young man who had stood in the door ran out through the kitchen, jumped on his horse, and galloped off.

CHAPTER II

A ROBBER TURNED LOOSE

As Jack rounded a low point of hill only half a mile from the house, he saw the buildings again. The sun was getting low, and he decided that he would put the animals in Powell's pasture and ask Mrs. Powell to keep him over night at the house. He wondered if she would know him, for since she had last seen him he had grown, as it seemed to him, a foot or two. As he came in sight of the house he noticed, hitched to the fence near the door, two riding horses and a loaded pack horse. Evidently there were visitors at the house. They were travelers, not cow punchers, for the pack animal carried a sawbuck pack-saddle and a very small pack.

These thoughts had just passed through Jack's head, when to his amazement he heard a shot which seemed to come from the house, and an instant later the door flew open and a man burst out, rushed to the horses, jumped on one of them and galloped fast down the road toward him. Jack could not conceive what this meant — shooting in Powell's house. He did not know the man who was approaching. He was young, fair-haired, rode like one accustomed to the saddle, and had a good horse, though it looked as though it had gone a long way. The rider was coming directly toward him, and, as he rode, he looked back at the house two or three times, as though fearing pursuit.

Jack did not know what all this meant, and yet one thing seemed certain — he must stop this man and find out what he had been doing. Yet to stop a man on the road he knew was pretty serious business, and might very likely lead to shooting. He had traveled enough on the prairie and had associated enough with older men to be cautious about getting into trouble; but here was a case where trouble seemed to be coming toward him so straight that he could not avoid it. For the first two or three moments the rider seemed not to notice Jack, but when he did so, he checked the speed of his horse, and looked uncertainly to right and left, as though seeking some way of escape. By this time Jack had stuck his spurs into Pawnee, and was riding fast toward the approaching man. He had his hand on his six-shooter, ready to draw it at the least sign of trouble. As they drew near to each other the young man made a motion as if to put his hand on his pistol butt, but Jack called to him sharply, "Hands up!" and drew his pistol. The young fellow's hands flew up in the air, while he stopped his horse. Jack rode around and coming up behind him on the right side, still holding his pistol ready, reached over and took the young man's gun out of his holster, and then ordered him sharply to turn around and ride in front of him toward the house. He watched him closely, for it was possible that somewhere about his person the man might have another pistol, but the young fellow seemed to have no desire to do anything save what he was told. His nerve had wholly left him.

They trotted up to the door of the ranch, and Jack called out for Mr. Powell, Charley and Mrs. Powell,

and a moment later a tall, handsome, brown-haired girl appeared at the door, holding a six-shooter in her hand. Jack instantly recognized her as his old friend Bessie, but Bessie grown out of all likeness to the slim-legged little girl that he had known half a dozen years before.

"Hello, Bessie!" called Jack. "You don't know me, I guess, but I am Jack Danvers, just over from Mr. Sturgis' ranch. I heard a shot and saw this man running away from the house, and stopped him. What has happened? Do you want him, or shall I let him go?"

"I don't know, Jack," Bessie answered; "we'll have to think about that. He ought to be tied up for a while anyhow, until we can tell you what has happened, and can decide what to do."

"Well," said Jack, "the first thing is to take his weapons if he has any. Here is the six-shooter he had when I stopped him. Will you hold it, and keep an eye on him while I search him? You used to be able to shoot when you were a little girl."

"I guess you will think I can yet, Jack," said Bessie. Jack now noticed that she looked very white. "That man's partner is in here, and we will have to do something with him."

Jack said nothing, but dismounted, went to the young rider, unbuckled and took off his belt and felt him all over to see whether he had another pistol. Nothing was found on him more dangerous than a pocket-knife, which Jack took. He had the young man dismount and sit down on the ground, and asked Bessie to stand guard over him. Then with a rope taken off one of the horses he tied the man's hands

and feet securely, and passing the rope from his wrists, which were tied behind his back, over a bar of the fence four feet from the ground, drew up the hands so as to keep the man's body bent forward, and to give him very little freedom of motion. Then he tied the horses to the fence and went to the door where Bessie stood.

"Tell me all about it now, Bessie," he said.

"No, Jack, I can't talk now," she replied. "Go in and speak to mother, and talk it over with her."

He passed through the kitchen and into the living-room, and the first thing that caught his eye there was a man lying on the floor, on his back, with one arm stretched out. Stepping up to him, Jack saw that he was dead, and apparently he had been moved a little, for on the boards was a smear of blood, leading to the man's body, which seemed to show that an effort had been made to drag him toward the door. Mrs. Powell was not there, but when Jack called her by name she opened a bedroom door and came out. Jack began to tell her who he was, but she knew him at once, and grasping both his hands began to cry and to tell him how glad she was to see him.

"Don't cry, Mrs. Powell," said Jack. "Tell me what all this is about, for of course I don't understand it at all. I heard a shot, and met a man riding hard away from the house. I stopped him and brought him back and now he is outside tied up, with Bessie watching him."

"Oh, Jack!" moaned Mrs. Powell, "to think that anything like this could happen in this country! We have plenty of bad men here, but I never thought that any of them would be bad enough to attack a woman;

and I never supposed that Bessie would have to kill one." The poor woman had great difficulty in speaking, and it was hard for Jack to understand what she was talking about; but some ideas he got. He patted her shoulder and told her that the trouble was all over now, and she need not worry about it, and that he would look after everything, if she would only tell him the whole story so that he could understand it. Then Mrs. Powell told him what had happened.

"Well, well," declared Jack, "this is certainly bad business — that anybody in this country should start in and rob women and children. However, it is mighty lucky that Bessie is so quick with her wits, and so quick with her gun. Now what shall we do with this man's partner?"

Mrs. Powell began to cry again.

"Dear me! dear me! I don't know what to say to you, Jack. If our men come back and find him here, he surely will never get off the place; they'll hang him on the gate-post; and I don't want that to happen. We've had trouble enough with this dead man here, and I don't want Charley or his father to get mixed up in any lynching."

"Well, Mrs. Powell," Jack replied, "this young fellow ought to be killed and killed quick. He surely has no business in this country. But I can understand how you feel. It wouldn't be very pleasant for you to have him hung right in your dooryard, as you might say. Let me go out and talk to Bessie, and see what she thinks. I have an idea from the way she looks and from what you tell me that she has pretty good sense; but first, it seems to me, we ought

to get rid of this carcass here. I'll open the front door and drag him out."

Jack opened the door, and then going back to where the man lay, and moving the furniture out of the way, took him by the two wrists and dragged him out of the door and left the body lying on the ground.

Going back to the kitchen door, he saw Bessie leaning against the fence watching the young man who was seated on the ground, and who apparently had not changed his position since he was tied up.

"Come over here, Bessie," Jack requested, and she walked with him to a place fifteen or twenty yards from the young man, and there in a low voice they talked over the situation. Jack told her that her mother had explained what had happened, and of Mrs. Powell's fear lest some of the people now off on the round-up should come back and find the prisoner at the house, and should hang him without ceremony.

"That is what I am afraid of, Jack. I want to have this thing ended now, as quickly as possible. It seems terrible that I should have had to kill that man; but I didn't know what else I could do to protect mother, and nobody knows where he would have stopped if something had not been done."

"Well," suggested Jack, "what's the matter with giving this young man his horse, or horses, and turning him loose now without any weapons?"

"I wish with all my heart you would do that. It seems to me that is the easiest way, and the best way, and it will certainly keep out of trouble any of the boys that may turn up here in the next few days."

"All right," said Jack, "we'll do that. But first I've got to use him for a little while, and you must

come along too, I am afraid, to stand guard over him."

"I'll do anything I can that you say is right," agreed Bessie.

Jack went over to the prisoner, and untying the ropes turned him loose.

"Now, young fellow," Jack said, "rub your arms and wrists and get the stiffness out of them, and then come down to the barn and help me hitch up a wagon."

They went to the barn and found there a couple of work horses, and harnessing them, hitched them to the wagon, into which they threw a pick and a couple of shovels. Driving up to the house, they stopped by the body of the man who had been shot, and lifted it into the wagon, covering it with a piece of an old tent. They then drove off up a ravine a mile or more from the house, where they stopped the wagon; and here in the side of a bank the two men dug a hole, and buried the would-be robber. Jack searched his pockets for some means of identification, but found in them nothing except a pipe, some tobacco, matches and a pocket-knife. His belt and cartridges were taken off to be carried back to the house.

The sun was close to the western horizon when they reached the house again. Jack left the young man unhitching the horses, and Bess watching him, while he returned to the house to tell Mrs. Powell what they had decided to do, and to ask her approval.

"That is the very best thing that can be done," she said. "Start him off for the railroad, and try to see that he gets there."

"I mean to ride with him for a mile or two," said Jack; "and I shall say to him that to-morrow morn-

ing I am going over to the round-up camp to tell them there what has happened, and that there is likely to be a hunt for him, and he had better quit the country as fast as he knows how."

"Good!" approved Mrs. Powell. "Ride with him over to the big hill, and from there watch him as far as you can, and then come back. We'll have supper ready by dark and we'll look for you then."

"All right," replied Jack. "Before I go, though, I'll turn my horses into the pasture, if you will let me, and take my bed off the pack horse."

It took scarcely five minutes to do this, for the hungry horses were still feeding close to the house. Then Jack went to the young man, who had returned to the place where he had been tied, and had seated himself on the ground there.

"You've got yourself into a place that will mean hanging for you, if you don't get out of the country quick," said Jack. "I am going to give you a chance for your life, and let you get to the railroad, where maybe you can strike a freight, or a passenger-train, that will take you away. If any of the people that belong in this part of the country come back and hear what you and your partner have done, they will start out and hunt you as long as they can find your tracks, and if they get hold of you, you'll swing. Who was this man that you came down here with, and where did you come from?"

"I don't know what his name was," answered the young man, "but up there we called him Bill Davis. We came down from just south of Buffalo. Davis had a little place up there with a few head of cattle and horses on it, but the stockmen thought he was brand-

ing too many calves, and they told him that he would have to get out of the country. When he saw they meant it, he came to me, for I had been living on a little place I had taken up not far from him, and said that he had to get out, and proposed to me to go somewhere and make a stake, and come back with something to put on our places. He persuaded me, and I went with him. I never knew he was going to try to rob these people here; they treated us awful white; but he said to me that if I didn't come with him to speak to the women, he and I would quarrel. I wish I had never seen him! I never got into trouble like this before. You can see for yourself that I ain't bad. Didn't I give up just as soon as you told me to?" The young man whimpered and looked as if he were going to cry.

"Well," admitted Jack, "you don't look to me like a fellow who would willingly be mixed up in robbing women and children, and I am going to let you go; but if I do, you've got to get out of the country quick, for if the men around here find you, they won't stop to talk to you, the way I have. The best thing for you to do is to ride into the railroad and get on a train and get out of reach as quickly as you can. Have you any money?"

"Yes, I have a five-dollar bill and some nickels."

"What about these horses? Who owns them?" asked Jack.

"One saddle horse and the pack horse belonged to Bill; and the horse I ride is mine, and so is the saddle."

"Well," said Jack, "you'd better get on your horse now and pull your freight for the railroad as quick as you can. I expect your horse isn't in very good

shape to make the ride, and maybe I'd better lend you one of mine to go in with. Do you know anybody at the railroad that would buy your horse and saddle?"

"Nary a person," was the answer. "I have never been down here before. The only thing that I can do is to leave the horse and saddle in town at some livery stable, or else turn him loose on the range."

"I will tell you what I'll do," said Jack; "if you want to sell that saddle for twenty dollars, I will buy it from you, and give you five dollars on account. You can leave it with Brown, at Medicine Bow, and if I hear that you have done so, and you will write to me, I will send you the fifteen dollars by mail. I think I'll keep Davis' horses and saddle here until somebody calls for them, and maybe your horse. You can take one of my string to ride into the railroad, and when you get there with it, either leave it at Brown's, or turn it loose on the range. It will come back to our ranch sooner or later. Now go and change your saddle to that gray horse you see feeding out there, just inside the pasture gate. I'll ride with you a little way."

The boy went over to his horse and mounted and Jack followed on Pawnee. In a moment a rope was on the gray, the saddles were changed and the two young men rode off in the direction of the railroad.

When they reached the top of the hill a couple of miles from the ranch, Jack pointed out to the man the way he should go to strike the main road leading into the town, and told him to go ahead. The young man hesitated for a moment.

"I don't rightly know how to thank you for turning me loose in this way," he said. "I swear that I never had any idea of hurting those two women, and

I hope some day I'll be able to make you believe that. Will you tell me how I may call you?"

"I am Jack Danvers; and you can always reach me by writing to the Swift Water Ranch, near Carbon. If you write me, I'll send you the fifteen dollars. What is your name?"

"I'm Sam Williams. I'm from Michigan; and I wish't I was back there now. Have you got a piece of paper? I'd like to have your address written down, so that I'll remember it."

Jack tore a scrap from an old envelope in his pocket, and writing the address, handed it over to the young man.

"Good-by, and thank you again," the latter said; and turning his horse's head rode to the south.

The sun had set, and it would soon be too dark to see far, but Jack drew back from the crest of the hill and, riding around a short distance, dismounted. Walking up, he peered over the ridge and watched the horseman, riding fast, until dusk had fairly settled down over the valley. Then turning, he mounted Pawnee, and in a short time was at the Powell's barn, where he unsaddled and turned his horse into the hay corral.

CHAPTER III

TO THE ROUND-UP CAMP

SUPPER smelled good to Jack as he entered the house on his return, for he had had nothing to eat since breakfast, and the ride had sharpened his appetite. Mrs. Powell and Bess were putting the food on the table, and Jack was sent to Charley's room to wash his hands. He noticed as he passed through the sitting-room that all was in order, and that here and there the floor was damp, showing that it had been scrubbed after he left.

When they sat down to the table, Jack's first words were:

"Well, he got off all right, and I watched him for a mile or two. He was going fast toward town, and I reckon we won't see him again in this part of the country. What did you do with the other horses, Bess?"

"I took the saddles off, and turned them into the pasture with your string. The two saddle horses are good ones, but I don't know what we ought to do with them."

During the evening much of the talk was about the exciting events of the day, though several times the women tried to get away from the subject by asking Jack about his life in the East and his studies, or by discussing the daily happenings of ranch life.

It was getting late, and Jack was thinking about excusing himself and going to bed, when he noticed that Bessie was holding her head to one side and apparently listening; and in a few seconds Jack heard the faint tramp of a galloping horse, which presently stopped at the barn.

"I'll just go out and see who that is," said Jack.

"You needn't bother, Jack; I know that gallop," Bessie replied. "That's old Kate; and probably father riding her."

"Good!" exclaimed Jack. "All the same I'll just go out and make sure."

He stepped out of the front door and walking around the unlighted side of the house stopped near the kitchen door and looked toward the barn. In a moment he heard footsteps and the clinking of spurs, with the sound of shaps rasping as a man walked, and a moment later recognized Mr. Powell, and stepped forward to speak to him.

"I don't suppose you know me, Mr. Powell, but I'm Jack Danvers from over at Mr. Sturgis' place and I want to say a word to you before you go to the house."

"Why sure I know you, Jack! That is, I know your voice; but I don't believe I'd know your body. Maybe when I get a chance to see your face, I'll recognize that. Are you out here for the summer?"

"Yes, Mr. Powell," was the reply; "but I want to speak to you now before you go in. There has been trouble here at the house; bad business, but no great harm done. It's all over now. Mrs. Powell will tell you the whole story."

The two shook hands and went into the house.

Powell kissed his wife and hugged his daughter in a way that showed how glad he was to see them again. Then he sat down and looked about, as if expecting something. Mrs. Powell spoke at once.

"I don't know if Jack told you about what happened here, Henry; but I was badly scared, and I guess Bess was, too, only she didn't show it."

"Well," said Powell, "tell me the story. There's no use in beating about the bush."

Mrs. Powell told him what had happened, and as her story went on, Powell's face took on a stern, hard look that promised badly for the criminals, if one of them should fall into his hands. When the narrative was ended, he turned to his daughter.

"Well, Bess," he said, "you certainly did the right thing: and I feel proud that you were so ready and so plucky. You did well, too," he said to Jack; "but, as I understand it, the thing was all over when you stopped the man who was running away. What's become of him?"

Then Jack took up the story, and told the decision that had been reached and how it had been carried out.

"Well," said Powell, "I believe on the whole you did the right thing. I don't quite think it's what I'd have done, if I'd been here; but if I'd been here I should have been mad clear through and would probably have killed the young fellow offhand."

"That would have been the natural thing to do," Jack replied; "but of course it wouldn't have been the pleasantest thing for Mrs. Powell and Bessie, and I felt that they had both had a pretty hard time, and that what they said ought to go."

“Yes,” declared Powell, slowly, as if considering the thing, “you did the right thing. I can see that now, and I’ll feel a good deal surer in the morning. I’m glad that neither Charley nor any of those young fellows came on with me from the round-up camp. If they had, I know they would have caught up fresh horses and followed that fellow to the railroad, and very likely caught him before he got on the train.

“Well,” he went on, “you’ve all had a pretty exciting day, and I expect you women had better go to bed. I’ll sit up here and smoke a pipe or two, and talk with Jack, and then we’ll go to bed too. I’m going back to the camp in the morning, and I expect you’ll want to go along too, won’t you, Jack? I judge that you’re headed for the round-up camp.”

“That’s where I want to go,” agreed Jack. “I came here because I had an idea the camp would be somewhere in this neighborhood, and I thought I could get directions to find it.”

After the two women had gone to bed, Powell filled his pipe and then drawing his chair close to Jack they talked together for a little while in a low tone. Jack told his host all that he had learned about the man who had been killed, and when he mentioned his name, Powell exclaimed:

“Why, that might have been the Bill Davis that was mixed up in that train robbing business nearly ten years ago, the one the miners hung Big-Nose George for in Rawlins. If that’s the man, he surely was bad, and deserved all he got.”

“Well,” said Jack, “I went through his clothes but couldn’t find any papers. The young fellow gave him the name of Davis. He was a man, I should

think, between forty and fifty, just beginning to get gray, a hooked-nosed man, with black hair and mustache."

"I never saw Davis," said Henry Powell; "only heard of him."

"The young fellow," Jack went on, "didn't seem to be bad. He seemed to be worthless, and no account. He had no great amount of sand, and was always looking around to find some way to get out of the difficulty."

"I've an idea, then, that he was not mixed up in the thing any farther than being in bad company."

"That's just what I thought," said Jack, "and I believe I'm right. Why, when he talked to me when I turned him loose, he came pretty near crying. I don't think he's a fellow of any force at all, and I don't believe that he will ever get back into this part of the country again."

"Could he get off on the railroad?" asked Powell. "Did he have any money?"

"Yes, he had five dollars of his own, and I gave him five more for his saddle, which he said he would leave at Brown's, and then if he lets me know his address, I will send him fifteen more by mail. Besides that, he left his horse here, and it's a better one than the gray I gave him to ride on. If he gets off on the railroad he's to leave the horse at Brown's, or turn it loose on the range. Of course, ten dollars will carry him some distance, but will leave him afoot wherever he stops. Still, that's a whole lot better than being hanged."

"Well," decided Powell, "I guess you did just right; and I'm glad it all happened as it did. It's a

mighty lucky thing for the women and me that you rode up here just as you did. I shouldn't have been afraid of anything more happening to them, but it would have been pretty bad for them to have to get rid of that carcass. Well, let's go to bed."

He stretched out his hand and gave Jack a grip that made the boy wince, and they went to their rooms.

Early the next morning Jack and Powell looked over the horses left there by the strangers the day before. The men had been well mounted, and the saddle and bridle belonging to Davis were new, good and strong. The pack horse was also a good animal, and looked as if it might have speed and endurance.

"Nice horses, aren't they, Mr. Powell?" said Jack. "But I don't know who owns them now."

"Yes," answered Powell; "they are nice horses. You'll find, if you live long enough in this country—maybe you've found it out already—that these rustlers and bad men always do have good horses. They've always got to be ready to skip off when any one gets after them, and they always try to be fixed so as to ride a little faster and a little farther than the man who is chasing them. So they always have good horses and good saddles. As to who owns these horses now, you and I can't say, but I guess nobody has a better title to them than we two, so we'll just hold them until somebody comes along and claims them and proves property. I don't know the brands of any of them. That one on the brown horse might be old Missouri John's "beer mug," blotted. If it is, he'll be along some day and likely know the horse. Now I've got to get Bessie to write some letters for

me this morning, and then I want to get some grub and put it on a horse, and after dinner we can start back to the round-up camp and get there before dark. Will that suit you?"

"Yes," replied Jack, "that will suit me to a T; and I am certainly glad to wait for you, to have company on the road over."

"Well," said Powell, "that will be good; then we can turn my pack horse loose and drive him with your *remuda*, and we can get along pretty fast."

As he said this, a call from the house told them that breakfast was ready, and they started back.

"By the way," asked Powell, as they were approaching the house, "what about those guns that you took away from the men yesterday?"

"Why," Jack answered, "you may as well keep them here. I have my own and don't need any more. I think the pair that Davis wore ought to belong to Bess."

Powell smiled.

"Well, maybe they ought to. I guess we'll keep those here, but the one you took from the young man you might as well keep."

"All right," said Jack, "I will; but of course I don't want to pack it around with me now. This one I am carrying came from a horse thief. Do you remember that time four or five years ago when we ran into a bunch of stolen stock on the Sweet Water, and Hugh killed black Bob Dowling? Hugh gave me his pistols, and ever since then I have worn one of them whenever I was in a place where I carried a pistol."

The house this morning looked more cheerful than

it had the afternoon before. Mrs. Powell and Bess were bright and smiling, and the breakfast was very good. Soon after the meal was over, Powell began the work of writing his letters by his daughter's hand. Jack went out and strolled about the barns and corrals, and killed time for several hours, and then coming back to the house, interrupted the letter writing by asking Powell if he could not get out the grub that was to be taken to the camp.

"I wish you would," said Powell, "if you haven't anything to do. Mrs. Powell will show you where the stuff is, and all I want to take is a couple of sacks of flour and two slabs of bacon. You will find pack-saddles and riggings hanging up in the storeroom where the grub is, and if you feel like doing it, you might catch up that sorrel horse that you'll find in the pasture, the one with two white feet, and either tie him in the barn, or put him in the small corral, so that we can get him quick when we are ready to pack."

"All right," answered Jack, "I'll do that. First I'll get out the grub and then I'll fix the saddle, and along just before dinner time I'll go down and get the horses and bring them up and put them in the corral. I don't know what horse you're going to ride."

"I'll ride old Kate back again. You know her. She is the brown, with a bald face and one white hind foot. Bring them all up to the corral just before dinner, and then they'll be handy."

It took Jack but a little time to get together the load for the pack horse and set it outside the storehouse; then he went to the barn, saddled up Pawnee and rode into Powell's small pasture where he got to-

gether the required horses, and drove them up to the corral.

Dinner was not so cheerful a meal as breakfast had been. It seemed to Jack that the women felt a little nervous about losing their men folk, and before the meal was over this was so obvious that Powell spoke about it.

“You women,” he said, “don’t want to get scared over nothing. It’s my belief that you might rake this country over with a fine-tooth comb and not find another man that would act as mean as that Davis did. You’ve both of you got good pluck, and have shown it, and I want you to keep on showing it now. All the same, if I were you I wouldn’t let any strangers come into the house. People that you know, of course, are all right, but strangers you had best keep off. If they ask what’s the matter, tell them you were badly treated once by some strangers, and that you won’t risk it again. You, Bess, had better wear your six-shooter all the time, unless you see somebody coming that you know; then I expect you would want to shed it. Somebody will be coming in from the round-up every two or three days; and in the course of a day or two, when this scare you’ve had wears off, things will go on just as they’ve always gone on, and you’ll have a real good time. Now,” he added, as he pushed back his chair, “Jack and me’ll go down and pack them animals, and then we’ll roll.”

The saddling and packing of the horses took but a short time, and after the animals had been turned out, and were feeding on the flat in front of the house, the men went up to say good-bye. The women clung to Powell, and seemed loath to let him go, and they

shook hands with Jack in an earnest, cordial fashion that greatly pleased him.

“I don’t know what we’d have done, Jack Danvers, if it hadn’t been for you,” Mrs. Powell said. “We folks will never forget how you helped us out.”

Powell waved his hand, and Jack lifted his hat, and they rode off.

CHAPTER IV

OLD FRIENDS

It was almost sunset when Powell and Jack rode over the hill and saw the round-up camp in the valley, far below them. There was a big bunch of cattle still scattered out and feeding, but about them were the four or five riders who were keeping them together, and who a little later, and before dark, would bring them up into a close bunch, to bed them down. Off to one side was the *cávaya*, or horse bunch, which contained the strings of the different riders, six or seven or eight horses to a man, and the work horses that were used on the chuck and bed wagons. Lounging around the camp were the men, apparently waiting for supper, which the cook announced just before Powell and Jack reached the camp. The men hurried up to the tent; each one supplied himself with plate, cup, knife, fork and spoon, and went over to the cook-stove and helped himself to food. When Powell and Jack stopped close to the camp, it was a boisterous crowd of full-mouthed men who shouted and waved their hats to them. Every one knew Powell, and half a dozen recognized Jack, who as a little fellow had been known to most of them. Jack was glad to see them all, but his eye roved about, looking especially for Hugh, who, after the first outbreak, rose from the ground, where he had been sitting

filling his pipe, and walked over to Jack and gave him a cordial hand-clasp.

“Well, son,” drawled Hugh, “I’m sure glad to see you again. It’s a long time since we’ve met, and I reckon we’ll have lots to say to each other, now that we’ve got together again.”

“You bet we will, Hugh,” cried Jack; “and we can’t begin too soon, according to my notion.”

A moment later their talk was interrupted by Charley Powell, who, slapping Jack vigorously on the back, told him to take off his saddle and turn his horse loose, for he was going to take the horses over and turn them into the *cávaya*. Jack unsaddled and let his horse go, and then Hugh said to him:

“Go get your supper now, and after you’ve eaten, or while you’re eating, come out here and set down. I want to see you and talk to you, even if your mouth is full and you can’t talk to me.”

Jack hurried to the cook’s tent and presently returned with a plate heaped high with food, and a cup of coffee brimming over, so that the steaming fluid dripped from it at every step. He sat down and began to eat, while Hugh, whose pipe was now going well, began to talk.

“Well, son, you’ve surely growed a heap since we saw each other last. You’re taller now, I reckon, than I am; but you ain’t nigh so thick; the fact is, it looks as if it was about time for you to stop growing long, and begin to grow broad, but then I reckon there’s time enough for that, maybe. Do you remember that last trip we made, when we went up over the ice in those high mountains in the main range? Do you remember the time Tony Beaulieu and his

partners shot holes in the tent? And do you remember that Indian that stopped us over by the crossing of St. Mary's River and wanted whisky?"

"You bet I remember it all, Hugh," said Jack; "but I think what I remember best of all is the way you held Tony Beaulieu and how he burst out crying when he couldn't get away; and the way old Calf Robe quirted those Indians that had stopped us."

"Yes, that sure was a good trip," replied Hugh; "but, then, I don't know as it was better than a whole lot of other trips we made. That first time, when we went up to the Piegan country, when you counted a *coup*, and you and Joe found that sack of gold; that must have been a dandy trip for you, because you were so much younger, and because everything that you saw was new and strange and exciting.

"Now this summer you're going to have a mighty quiet time, I reckon, with plenty of hard work; nothing to see, except ride circle, getting in at night feeling as if your feet belonged a yard apart; then maybe going out on night herd, and serenading these cattle, if a storm comes up and they get anyways uneasy. No, you can't expect to have much happen in a cow camp."

"Oh, I don't know, Hugh," laughed Jack; "there are lots of things that can happen out in this country yet. Of course, there's not much except hard work and grief that happens in a cow camp, and yet there's some excitement in riding and roping, and there's always a chance that we may run across a bear and have some fun with him."

"Well," Hugh replied, "the country is getting pretty quiet now. Maybe it's because I'm getting old,

and maybe it's because I've seen a good many things happen, but I certainly don't get excited the way I used to."

By this time Jack had finished eating. Putting his things together, he carried them back to the cook's tent, and then returned to Hugh, and sat down close beside him.

"Well, Hugh," he said, "there was something happened yesterday that I want to tell you about; though I shouldn't say anything about it to anybody else, unless it gets to be talked about. You speak about the country being in a bad way and no good any more, and sometimes I think you're right. Now something happened yesterday over at Powell's that I wouldn't have believed could have taken place in a country where there are men, and American men at that! It isn't a thing I want to talk about, but I do want to tell you about it, and to ask you whether you think what I did was right. I am not doubtful about it myself, but I'd like to have your opinion, too."

With that Jack opened his heart and told Hugh all the events of the day before.

The story finished, Hugh sat for some time without speaking, looking at his pipe which had gone out while he listened. At last he raised his eyes.

"Well, son, I think that what you did was the wisest possible thing to have done. Of course you didn't have much choice in the matter. You were bound to do whatever Mrs. Powell and little Bess said that they wanted done, but as it happens what they wanted done was the best thing that could have been done. It surely would have been mighty uncomfortable for those two women—as nice women as I ever saw

—to have a man lynched on their account, as you might say, right close to the house. It was up to you to help them out of that scrape, and you did it sensibly and well. I'm not a mite surprised at Bessie's killing that man. She's a mighty smart little girl; thinks quick and acts quick. I expect if she hadn't shot as she did, there's no telling what amount of deviltry those two men might have been up to."

"You're right, Hugh, she's plucky and a good shot, and she must have been mighty quick to think what to do; but, I tell you, it made her feel mighty bad to be obliged to do it, and for a while after she had shot she looked as white as a ghost."

"Davis?" reflected Hugh. "I am trying to see if I can't recollect that name. What sort of looking fellow was the one that got killed?"

"He looked like 'most anybody else, except that he had a more or less hooked nose, and a black mustache. Mrs. Powell said that his eyes looked sharp and snappy, and sort of cruel; but of course I didn't see his eyes."

"I was wondering," said Hugh. "Years ago, down in old Nebraska, I used to know a cow puncher named Bill Davis, and he might have been this man. The description fits him well enough, but I don't know as it makes much difference, seeing he's dead. You say you didn't find any letters or papers on him."

"Nothing; nothing except a pipe and tobacco and matches, and a little small change."

"Of course, you don't know anything of what become of the other fellow?"

"Nothing more than what I have told you," said

Jack. "He started for the railroad, and that's the last I saw of him."

"I don't believe you ever will see him; unless he writes you for the fifteen dollars you owe him. He may do that; but, somehow, I think likely he'll be too scared even to do that."

"I don't know," replied Jack; "he seemed mightily afraid of the business end of the six-shooter, but he didn't seem very much afraid of me; he seemed kind of sorry rather than afraid. Well, it's Powell's business, and not mine, and I am not going to say anything about it. If he wants to speak of it, all right."

"I've heard of mighty few people getting into trouble by keeping their mouths shut," said Hugh, "but of a whole lot that have come to grief from talking too much. You'll be all right, I think, to keep quiet."

Jack stood up.

"I guess I'll go over and speak to Mr. McIntyre, and get my work laid out for the next two or three days," he said. "He may want me to go on night herd to-night. I suppose there are plenty of fellows who will be mighty glad to get off."

Jack's guess was a good one. The round-up foreman was glad to see him, of course — glad to get a new hand, and a fresh hand. He told Jack that the best thing he could do now would be to go out and catch up a horse and take his turn at night herd until 10 o'clock. Then he could come in and get five or six hours' sleep before they started to ride in the morning. The *cávaya* had just been brought in; and Jack, taking his rope, went out and caught one of his string and brought it in and saddled it. Pawnee would have been the horse chosen, but Pawnee had

already carried him from Powell's to the round-up, and Jack thought the horse entitled to a little rest.

The night was calm and pleasant, and there seemed no reason to suppose that anything would disturb the cattle, so only two boys were sent out to ride around them at present, relieving the four or five who had had charge of them during the latter part of the day, who had now brought them together and waited until they had finally lain down and were peacefully chewing the cud under the stars, just then coming out.

Tulare Joe was Jack's companion: a new acquaintance, but a nice looking fellow, whose name suggested that he came from somewhere in California. He was a man eight or ten years older than Jack, quiet, pleasant, soft-voiced, and apparently a rider. As the two approached the cattle they separated and began to ride around them; and one by one the other riders, as they met them, exchanged a word or two and turned their horses in the direction of the camp. Presently from the other side of the herd, Jack caught the sound of Joe's voice droning out a song, the words of which he could not hear; but later, when they were relieved by other boys, and were riding back to camp, he asked Joe to teach him the song. Joe said that he knew only one verse, which ran like this:

“ Oh! the cowboy's life is a dreary one,
He works from dawn till the setting of the sun,
And then his work is left undone,
For his night herding then comes on.

“ Sing, who-o, who-o, whoop; cows away;
He works all night and he works all day.
Whoop-i-wo; whoop-i-way;

For very poor chuck and darned poor pay;
Sing, whoop-i-whoa who-ay."

After a few days Jack caught the air of this, and thereafter often sang it when on night herd.

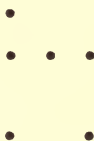
"I don't know why it keeps the cattle quiet," said Joe, "it certainly ain't the sentiment; and I don't believe it's the tune. I suppose like as not it gives them something to think about and keeps them from looking around, hunting for things to get scared at. Maybe, too, it gives them confidence when they think that the men and the horses are right close to 'em all the time. Anyhow, I've always heard about singing to the cattle ever since I first forked a horse, and I've seen sometimes, when cattle were mighty nervous and uneasy, when the singing seemed to keep them from breaking away."

Jack slept soundly that night and the call to grub came all too soon the next morning.

CHAPTER V

CUTTING AND BRANDING

THE sun was just getting ready to look over the hills the next morning and the men were hastily bolting their breakfast, when the horse wrangler brought up the *cávaya* to the camp. Before this, some of the men had driven into the ground five stakes, four of them marking the four corners of a square of considerable size, with one stake between two of the corners, or on one side of this square. A sixth stake was driven out on the prairie a few yards from one end of the three stakes in line, and at right-angles to that line, thus



To the tops of these stakes, which were only three feet high, were tied ropes which when pulled tight would make a rope enclosure, complete on three and one-half of its sides, but with an opening between one of the corner stakes and the one standing between the two corners. From one of the corner stakes to the one standing alone on the prairie, ran another rope, making a sort of wing which would stop animals tending to

walk by the corner, and would turn them into the opening.

Down on the plains in old times rope corrals were often made by tying ropes to the front and hind wheels of a wagon, and stretching them out at right angles to the length of the wagon. The horses were driven into this corral and then caught there. The Texas ponies of those earlier days were cunning little rascals and many of them had learned to put the nose down close to the ground and get the head under the rope and then raising the head to push out. Of course when one had got out and rushed away, the others would follow, pushing down the rope and getting free. Often the man who was holding the end of the rope, seeing a horse about to push under, would slacken the rope until it was under the pony's nose, and then, giving the rope a quick jerk, it would spring up and hit the horse, making him throw up his head. In the mountains such corrals were sometimes used, but as often those made with the stakes.

The *cávaya* was driven very slowly toward this rope corral and some of the boys ran out to it, one handling the rope which was to act as a wing and the others the ropes which ran from corner to corner of the corral. The horse wrangler drove his animals along at a walk and turned them into the opening of the corral, the men at the ropes raising them as the horses entered. The horses stopped and made no attempt to push against the ropes. After the whole bunch had entered the corral, the man at the wing rope walked around and stood by the middle one of the three stakes in line, thus completely closing the corral. Ducking under the ropes, the boys now went

slowly and quietly into the enclosure, and caught the gentle horses, which, one by one, they led out and tied. Over the heads of any horses that were not willing to be caught, ropes were quietly tossed, and the horses led out.

Jack, who was taking part in all this work, was interested, as he had been so many times before, in seeing the remarkable change of demeanor in a horse, just as soon as it feels a rope on it. The animal may be wild and frisky — apparently untamable — in the corral, but let the rope drop over its head, and it is at once transformed into the meekest and most commonplace of animals.

Of course, this is not true of young colts that have not been broken, but the horse that has had a few falls, and has learned the power of the rope, always fears it.

When all the men had caught up their horses, and the ropes had been taken from the corral, the rest of the bunch were allowed to wander off, while the horse wrangler went to the cook tent to get his breakfast.

Now followed a scene more or less amusing and exciting, or irritating and tiresome, as one happened to look at it. Many cow horses, even though well broken, always object to being saddled, while some object both to being saddled and to being mounted. Now and then was found a horse that had to be blinded before he could be saddled; and occasionally one that refused to be bridled. The younger men shouted and made much fun of their fellows who had horses that were disposed to be nervous, or to object to the saddle.

The older men, when after some trouble they had succeeded in getting the saddles on their horses, and

the cinches drawn, were likely to lead the animals up and down by a rope, and let them buck with the empty saddle.

The horse selected this morning by Tulare Joe was young, skittish and rather disposed to make trouble. When Joe approached him, carrying the blanket in his hand, he reared and sometimes came forward on his hind legs striking with his forefeet. The young man was cool and quick, and showed no impatience whatever, but after a few minutes' fruitless work of this sort he called to Jack, who was standing looking on, having saddled his own quiet horse, and asked him to bring his rope. As Jack approached, Joe called to him:

"The next time this horse goes up in the air catch him and throw him for me."

The opportunity came a moment or two later. Jack threw the rope, from a little behind the horse, caught it and gave a sidewise tug while the horse was on its hind legs. The animal fell heavily. Joe jumped on its head, while Jack quickly looped the lariat around its hind legs and tied the horse fast. Without the slightest sign of impatience, Joe lifted the horse's head, and bridled him, while Jack brought the saddle; and a moment later, having had the rope loosed which bound its feet, the half dazed animal stood up and in a few seconds was saddled.

"Much obliged, Jack," said Joe. "You saved me a little time, and have cut those fellows out of a whole lot of the joshing they would have given me while I was fooling with this horse alone. Then, too, you had added some to McIntyre's peace of mind. He thinks the horses brought on a round-up

ought to be gentled before the round-up starts, and hates to see time wasted with a horse that is hard to handle."

"Well, Joe," was the response, "I like the way you handle your horse. Most of us lose our patience and kick and swear and pound a horse with a quirt; and that is something that does no good. I know years ago, when I was a little fellow, and was first out here, Hugh used to tell me that the main reason why a man was better than a horse was that he had sense, and if he didn't use his sense, why he wasn't of much account."

Joe laughed.

"You take it from me," he said, "that old man knows a heap, and if you've been traveling around with him for some years, like you say you have, I reckon that you know that a heap sight better than I can tell you."

By this time most of the men had already started out toward the large bunch of cattle now scattered over the prairie, feeding. McIntyre, the foreman, had given orders to the men as to where the various bunches were to be held, and the representatives of the different brands were talking with each other about this. In this bunch of cattle there were four principal brands, which must now be separated and divided into four herds, each one of which would be driven off by the representatives of the brand. Besides the cattle bearing these four brands, there were, of course, in the large bunch a number of strays — cattle that perhaps had wandered on to the range from a distance, or that had been dropped by some one driving a herd through the country, or that were owned by

small people, the size of whose bunch did not justify them in sending a representative with the round-up. Of these strays many would be recognized by the cow men present. Those would be turned into the bunch of cut cattle that would pass nearest to the ranch of the owner, while others bearing brands unknown to any of the cow punchers would be kept with the biggest herd, turned out on the home range of that bunch, and perhaps watched for a while in the hope that an owner would turn up. If none was found, the stock association would be notified and the animal turned over to it.

As Jack and Joe drew near the big bunch, half a dozen men were circling around it, bringing it together in a close, compact mass, while two or three other riders were urging their horses among the cattle, scrutinizing the brand which each bore. Most of the cattle had completely shed their winter coats and were short-haired and smooth, so that the brands showed up well and could be read at a considerable distance.

It was interesting to Jack, as it is to every one who witnesses it, to see the trained cow horse follow an animal. There, for example, was a blue roan cow pushing her way through the thick mass of the herd, just ahead of the horse ridden by Rube. The horse was going at a trot and was close to the heels of the cow, which seemed to push always toward the place where the cattle were crowded thickest. Presently Rube got her out from the center of the herd and over toward the edge, and every time that she turned to go back toward the center the little horse, with ears pricked forward, dodged more quickly and

got in her way. So, little by little, she was edged out to the border of the bunch; and then it was seen that, running close by her side and almost under her belly, was a strong and sturdy calf that must have been born in March or early April. As soon as the cow had reached the edge of the herd the little pony galloped forward, driving straight toward her except when she tried to break back, and then always getting in her way. Rube now swung his quirt over his head and presently the cow, giving up the struggle to return, started straight off over the prairie to a little bunch of the Sturgis' cattle that had already been brought together and that Hugh and another man were keeping by themselves. Just as the cow reached the edge of this little bunch, a cow puncher threw his rope and caught the calf's hind legs; the horse wheeled instantly and started on a quick gallop, dragging the calf over the prairie to a fire in which the branding irons were heating. Here two of the boys jumped down and held the calf; another snatched a hot iron from the fire and swiftly put the Sturgis brand on it. Then, it was turned loose, and hurried back to the little bunch from which its anxious mother trotted out with threatening calls, and after nosing it all over walked back into the crowd.

McIntyre had detailed Jack to act through the day as one of the calf branders, and all day long he was busy roping calves, dragging them up to the fire and helping to hold them down, while some one clapped on the iron. It was not pleasant work—the smoke of singed hair rose from the animal's side, and the poor creature bawled piteously; but, after all, a great



"THE COW STARTED STRAIGHT OFF OVER THE PRAIRIE."

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Photo. by Harry Mintz, Binghamton, N. Y.

many painful and disagreeable things have to be done, and this was one of them.

As the day went by, and Jack got hotter and more thirsty and more dusty and more tired, he derived a little amusement from wondering what some of those eastern pilgrims, who had talked to him of the romance of the cowboy's life would think of that life if for one day they had to do the work that the cowboy has to do every day. No one can imagine the weary monotony of doing this work over and over again; the strength that it may take to hold the calf; the heat from the fires; the cloud of dust, grime and ashes among which one works; the constant trifling annoyances of being burned by a hot iron, being kicked by a frisky calf, or having one's hands hurt by the rope. All these things, combined with the physical force that is constantly called into play, make the work laborious and tiresome. The romance of the cowboy's life exists only in the imagination. Of course the boys are cheerful and merry, laughing and joking all the time, making fun of their own mishaps, or of those of their neighbors, and this constant flow of good spirits makes the work far lighter than it otherwise would be.

Now and then during the day, a little variety was offered by some cow that, pestered beyond endurance, at last refused to run any longer and turned to fight. Such a cow becomes at once a dangerous animal; and to get her calf away from her, unless it can be frightened into leaving its mother for a short distance, is sometimes difficult.

Jack met with such a cow, which, after wasting a lit-

tle energy in charging him, contented herself with standing still and threatening with her horns, while the calf stuck close to her side. Two or three times Jack rode swiftly by her and threw his rope at the calf, but the little beast stood so close under its mother's side that in no case did the rope catch it. Jack tried to ride near enough to the calf to lash it with his rope, in the hope that this would start it out from its position of safety, but the attempt was a failure, and the second time he did this the cow charged him viciously. He wheeled his horse and got away, but the long horns swept so close that it gave him a moment's uneasiness lest his horse should be harmed. He whirled quickly to get back to the cow, thinking that possibly the calf might have been left behind, but this had not happened: it was still close to its mother.

About this time, Joe swept by him dragging a calf at the end of his rope, and a few moments later, after the calf had been turned loose, Joe returned.

"Why, here's my chance to pay you off for what you did for me this morning," he said to Jack. "Rope the old cow's horns and I'll take her hind feet and we'll stretch her."

No sooner said than done. In a moment Jack's rope settled over the cow's horns, and as she at first pulled back and then started forward, Joe very cleverly picked up both her hind feet and turned his horse the other way; instantly the cow was stretched out helpless on the prairie. Jack made his rope fast to the horn of his saddle, and left his horse to hold the cow while he ran back to her. Joe in the meantime rode forward toward the cow's head, thus bringing her

hind feet up under her breast; and in a moment she was securely tied. The calf had run off a few yards, and stood there bewildered.

"There's your calf," said Joe, as he swung into the saddle again. "Go and brand him."

Jack freed his rope from the cow's head, rode over and caught the calf, and when it was branded, dragged it back to its mother. Then he untied the cow and, hopping into the saddle before she regained her feet, was soon off after another calf.

So the day went on: a long day filled with fun, jollity, laughter, provoking incidents and irritating happenings; so that at night when the men returned to camp they were all weary and enormously hungry. The representatives of each one of the four different brands drove off their cattle to some distance from the main herd, and watched them while they fed and drank, filling their bellies for the night.

A little later these representatives would be relieved by the night herders who now, with several herds to watch instead of one as the night before, would ride about and keep apart the different bunches.

Hungry and tired as they were, a number of the punchers, instead of going directly to camp, rode down in the stream-bed well below the camp and there stripping off their upper clothing whipped the dirt out of it as best they could, and scrubbed their white healthy bodies free from the dust that had sifted through their shirts. The effort to get the grime and sand from their hair was hopeless, except for those men who had been thoughtful enough before starting out on the round-up to have their hair clipped short, and of these there were only two or three.

By the time they reached camp, supper was ready, and it was a ravenous lot of cow punchers who scrambled for plates, cups, and knives and forks, and enjoyed the hearty, wholesome food that simmered on the fire.

At length, stuffed to repletion, Jack threw himself on the ground near Hugh.

"I feel like a boa-constrictor that has eaten an ox," he laughed.

"Well," replied Hugh, "I guess you're stuffed pretty full. It's hard work branding calves, and it's work that you ain't used to right now. It won't be so hard on you a week or two from this, when you've got more into the run of things."

"Of course you're right," said Jack. "I have not done any work just like this for a good while, and it does seem hard and tiresome now, but it's like 'most everything else: we'll get used to it after a while."

"I reckon you didn't see Vicente get chucked today, did you?" asked Hugh. "No," he went on, "I'm sure you didn't, because you were over there by the fire when it happened. He tried to throw a cow, and when he stopped his horse the saddle cinch broke and he went a-flyin'. It didn't hurt him none, but he was pretty mad."

"Why, how did it come to break?" asked Jack.

"That was the funny part of it. You know he only came in day before yesterday, and coming down through the mountains the night before he got here, they camped, and along in the night Vicente was waked up by hearing a porcupine walking around camp. Of course, he thought of his saddle at once, and got up out of his blankets. It was bright moonlight and

in a minute he saw the porcupine close to his saddle. He grabbed up a stick of firewood — he had got in late and cooked his supper with just a few odds and ends of brush and limbs that he had picked up around camp — and with one of these sticks he went for the porcupine. The stick was no good and broke the first time he hit the animal, and it ran off into the brush.

“Vicente knew it would come back, and he got a stout club so as to kill it if it bothered him. Then he took his saddle to bed with him and tried to stay awake; but he didn’t stay awake. Presently he heard the porcupine whimpering about his bed, and he jumped up and mighty soon pounded the life out of the beast. He looked at his saddle the next morning, and it seemed to him to be all right, and he rode down the hill with it and didn’t have occasion to use it hard until to-day.

“When he looked at it, after he got chucked, he found that that blasted porcupine had just taken a nip or two at the string that tied the latigo to the ring of the saddle. Maybe there was a little salt in that string from the horse sweat, or maybe it was just an accident. Anyhow, the string was cut enough so that when a pull came the saddle flew, and Vicente with it.”

“Well, I am glad that he killed the porcupine,” said Jack. “They are pretty useless beasts, according to my way of thinking.”

“I don’t think much more of them than you do; but up in some parts of the North the Indians think they are about the finest eating there is, and I reckon the Indians’ clothing in old times wouldn’t have been

half as fancy as it used to be if it hadn't been for porcupine quills. You know in old times, before the Indians got glass beads by trading with the white folks, they used to use quills and feathers and hair, and sometimes black roots, to ornament their clothes, and their lodges. Of course, they dyed the quills or feathers, and the roots too, all sorts of colors, and made their moccasins and leggings and shirts and robes real pretty."

"Yes," said Jack; "I have seen buffalo robes that were handsomely worked with quills; and up there in the Piegan country pretty nearly half the shirts, and a good part of the pipe stems, were ornamented with quills."

"That's so," said Hugh. "The Piegans are great fellows to use quills, and so are the Cheyennes."

"That's one thing I want to ask you about, Hugh: how they colored all these different things yellow and red. Of course they didn't have to dye the quills black, because most of them are part black already."

"Well," Hugh promised, "we'll have a talk about that sometime; but I reckon that just now, as my pipe is out, I'm going to bed. I've not much hard work to do on this round-up, and McIntyre isn't going to put me on night herd, but I reckon I need all the sleep I can get to-night."

CHAPTER VI

RIDING CIRCLE

By the end of the following day the cutting of the cattle — that is the work of separating the different brands into the four bunches, or herds — had pretty well been completed. McIntyre, therefore, determined to send off to their home ranges, which were not far away, the cattle bearing the Sturgis and Powell brands, while the rest of the outfit would keep on and work the remaining territory. It would take only three or four days for the cattle that were now being sent off to reach their home ranges, where they could be turned loose, and probably held by one man with only a little watching. As soon as the cattle had reached their ranges and been turned over to the people at the ranch, the men who had been sent back with those brands would at once return to the camp and continue the round-up work. Powell and his hired man were to take the Powell cattle, while Hugh and Rube were chosen to take back the Sturgis cattle. McIntyre very wisely kept with him the younger men, like Charley Powell and Jack, well understanding that they would work harder and longer and would be fresher every day than the older men.

The cattle started at daylight the next morning, and Jack rode a few miles with the Sturgis cattle,

which were going directly across country, and not around by way of Powell's ranch.

The cows moved very deliberately and were constantly stopping to feed; and by the time Jack had ridden four or five miles back and forth behind the herd, pushing on the lagging ones and breathing the dust kicked up by the feet of the cattle, he was glad that the task of driving the bunch back to the ranch had fallen to others.

Finally he turned about, to go back to the round-up camp.

"I reckon you'll see us again in about four days," Hugh said. "It'll take us pretty nearly three days to get to the ranch with these cows, and a day to get back to camp. We'll strike it down close to the Platte, likely on Sand Creek. I don't suppose you have any message for your uncle?"

"Just tell him I am all right and having a good time. You might tell him, too, what happened over at Powell's. And, of course, if there's any mail for me, bring it back with you. I don't expect to hear anything from that man I bought the saddle from. Maybe, instead of leaving the saddle at Brown's, he just took it with him on the train; but if he did, I wouldn't be a bit surprised if he sent me back my five dollars."

"Well," said Hugh, "it will be all guessing for a while yet; but I'll bring any mail there is."

"So long," called Rube; and Jack turned and rode back toward the camp. The distance that had seemed so very long when driving the herd, now seemed surprisingly short, for he rode fast. He did not ride back to the old camp because they were going to

move that morning, and when he rode down out of the hills he could see, a couple of miles away on the prairie, the two wagons and the *cávaya* crawling along over the sage-brush flat toward the next camp, which was to be on Box Elder Creek.

When he overtook the wagons, Frank, the cook, who was driving the chuck wagon, told him that McIntyre had left word that Jack should start out and make a short circle to the eastward, taking in the low hills on the edge of the basin, but not going far back, and should turn anything that he found down into the flat country, where it could be readily gathered the next day. Jack accordingly rode on to the *cávaya*, roped a fresh horse, and turned loose Pawnee, and then rode back to the cook's wagon, where he begged from Frank a chunk of bread and some bacon. Having disposed of that, he rode off toward the low hills to the east.

When he had gone a short distance into the hills he saw fresh tracks of horses and of cattle running, and from this he concluded that riders had passed over this ground the day before and gathered what cattle had been feeding there; and presently, coming across a trail of a good many head, with horse tracks following the trail and on top of the cow tracks, he made sure that his conclusion was right.

After riding a mile or two farther, however, he came across a little bunch of cattle feeding on the steep hillsides of a ravine, and going around them he pushed them down the hill and in the direction in which he was riding. The cattle were not wild, and it would have been easy to drive them in any direction; but of course they went slowly, and if Jack

simply drove them into the round-up camp he could not cover much country; on the other hand, if he drove them down into the valley he knew that at this time of the day they would at once turn about and return to the hills where there was water and, in the ravines, the green grass that the cattle like.

While he was mulling over this, and wondering what he would better do, the cattle ahead of him passed over a ridge and down the steep sides of another ravine, and two or three yearlings in play ran down the hill and through a thick patch of low brush that grew at the bottom of the ravine. As they rushed into that, from its upper end a small black animal, which was unmistakably a bear cub, ran out.

Jack was riding a good quick horse, and almost without thinking he turned and galloped along the steep hillside to try to head off the cub, which kept on up the bottom of the ravine. The ground was very steep, and broken every now and then by little washouts, and two or three times Jack held his breath as he wondered whether the horse would get across them or not. But the animal was sure-footed, besides being swift. It did not even stumble; and before long Jack was bearing down well toward the bottom of the ravine and was a little ahead of the bear. When the two were pretty close together, the bear suddenly turned and began to scramble up the hill, away from Jack. Two or three jumps of the active horse, however, quickly brought it within roping distance, and in a moment the noose was over the bear's head. The horse had turned, and with a mighty pluck the little bear flew out from the hillside and seemed to land on its head in the middle of

the ravine. Jack kept the rope tight for a moment, but seeing that there was no movement at the other end, he dismounted and walked back to the bear. The little beast — hardly larger than a setter dog — was quite dead. Jack could not tell whether the pull of the rope had broken its neck, or it had been killed by its fall.

The work of dressing the cub took but a few moments; but to get it on the saddle was more difficult, for the horse regarded the carcass with suspicion and declined to stand when the bear was put on it. Jack was finally obliged to blind the animal with his coat until the load was firmly tied behind the saddle. Then — being unwilling to take risks in this rough country — he led the animal down the ravine. It did not pitch, though it shied and several times tried to rid itself of the saddle by prolonged kicking. At length, however, when Jack reached a place where the ravine was wider and the ground more or less level, he mounted, and the horse went well enough.

Then Jack went back to look for his cattle. He soon found them, and after following them over three or four ridges, came on another much larger group. Gathering them all together, he started down toward the prairie with about seventy-five head of cattle before him. He took good note of the point where he left the hills, intending to drive his cattle into camp and then, if daylight lasted, to come back and resume his search for others.

He pushed the cattle pretty hard, and about the middle of the afternoon had brought them within a mile of camp, where he left them and, getting a fresh horse, returned to the hills.

During the afternoon he found two or three more little bunches of cattle, and shortly before sundown started in with about thirty head. As he was riding toward camp, he met the bunch that he had driven in that afternoon working back toward the hills; so he finally brought in and delivered at camp about one hundred head.

The other parties that had been riding circle during the day had gathered a good many cattle; so that there was again a good-sized herd being held near the camp, to be taken on the next day and to be added to daily, until enough had been gathered for another cutting.

Jack's roping of the little bear was interesting to the camp chiefly because of the variety that it would give to the daily fare of beef and bacon; but another one of the cowboys had had an adventure that had not turned out so comfortably as Jack's.

Juan, a Mexican, who had drifted into the country from the southwest, and who was a most skilful cow hand, in riding along a steep mountain-side, rough with rocks, had startled from his bed beneath an old cedar tree a big bull elk with thick, growing horns just beginning to branch. Juan, of course, rode after him as hard as he could go. The roughness of the ground and the great rocks that lay everywhere scattered along the mountain-side offered no impediment to the elk's speed, but the horse could not do its best on this ground, and had difficulty in overtaking the elk. At length a little patch of smoother ground was reached. Juan pushed his horse up within throwing distance and made a good throw which settled around the animal's head and neck. The loop was

so large, however, that it fell down against the brute's chest; and just at that moment pursued and pursuer came to a piece of ground so rough with great rocks that even Juan did not dare to ride into it. He tried to stop and throw the elk; but there was not time for him to turn; and the steady pull of the elk's chest on the rope dragged the horse staggering onward for a few feet, when Juan, to save his mount, was obliged to free his rope from the horn of the saddle. The elk sailed up the mountain-side, the rope dragging behind it, while Juan sat there on his panting horse and uttered Mexican maledictions. That evening the cowboys had a good deal of fun with Juan.

After supper, Jack saw Tulare Joe sitting on the ground working at something a little way from the camp, and walking over to him saw that he was taking off bits of flesh from a small deer hide which was entirely fresh.

"Where did you get your hide, Joe?" asked Jack.

"Why," said Joe, "some of the boys started the deer to-day out of a little patch of brush. It ran from them up over the hill and met me just on top. I happened to have my rope in my hand and I caught it. I'm going to keep it and get two or three others, if I can, and make me a buckskin shirt for winter. They say they're the warmest things you can wear when you're riding in a cold wind, and they don't muffle you up the way a coat does — they leave you free. I'd like to stretch this hide, if I could; but I won't have time to do it on the round-up. If I could stretch it and get it dried flat it would make it easier to pack and easier to handle when it comes to tanning it; but of course on the round-up I haven't the

time to peg the hide out, and no time to do the tanning while it's fresh, the way it really ought to be done."

"I didn't know," said Jack, "that it's better to tan a hide right fresh than after it is dried."

"Yes," said Joe, "it is; at least, that's what I've been told. All I know about tanning was taught me by the Navajos down south, and they make awful good soft buckskin."

"I have never done any tanning; but I have seen a heap of robes dressed by women in the Blackfeet country. They tan a buffalo robe in a wonderful way, so that it is as soft as a piece of cloth; but they don't make good buckskin. According to all I have heard, the mountain Indians make the best buckskin."

"That's what they say," answered Joe. "I've seen some wonderful buckskin made by the Utes, and by the Navajos too."

"You have been down among the Navajos, have you?" Jack asked, as he sat down on the ground and, taking out his pocket-knife, began to work on the skin. "I'm interested in them, for when I was a little fellow I used to read Mayne Reid's books, and they had lots to say about the Navajos, and about the raids they used to make down in Mexico."

"Yes," replied Joe, "they were certainly great raiders; and they've got lots of men and women and children there in the camp that are as white as I am. Most of them, they say, were captured down in Mexico as little children and brought up and raised in the tribe, and now, so far as their feelings go, are just as pure Navajo as anybody could be."

"I guess that's so. There isn't anything in blood

or race that makes a white man different from an Indian, if he is brought up in an Indian way."

"Not much. Those Navajos, too, are mighty handy with tools and with their fingers. I reckon you've seen lots of Navajo blankets, and likely, too, you may have seen some of the silversmith work they do. They make fine rings and sort of pins, like the women wear at their throats, and they're pretty handy about setting bits of turquoise in silver. They make a whole lot of real pretty ornaments."

"I've heard something about that," said Jack; "though I've never seen any of their work, except maybe a blanket or two. And you say they're tanners, too?"

"Yes. I had a kind of friend in the camp once when I stayed down there, and he showed me his way of tanning; and he certainly did make nice buckskin."

"I wish you would tell me how to do it; or, better still, let me see you tan this hide," said Jack. "But the first thing you want to do with this hide is to try to stretch it flat, and that you can't do in the common way. Why don't you treat it the way the trappers treat beaver skins?"

"Well, if I knew how, maybe I would; but I don't know how. I never saw anybody trap beaver."

"Why," exclaimed Jack, "I can show you how in a minute and a half if we can get some willows that will bend right, and I'm pretty sure we can, for there's a bunch down there close to the creek. Come on down with me and we'll cut some shoots; and then if you've got a piece of twine we'll stretch the hide on a hoop. Very likely it will be set by morning,

and you can get Frank to carry it inside his chuck wagon tied to the bows."

"I'll go with you," said Joe, "if you'll just show me what to do."

Along the border of the stream was a growth of rather tall willows two or three years old, and Jack soon cut half a dozen long and rather slender shoots. Then the boys returned to the place where the deer hide had been left. Here Jack trimmed the willow shoots in the proper way, leaving many twigs at the smaller ends, and, showing Joe how to do it, they soon made an oblong hoop somewhat longer and wider than the fresh deer hide stretched out on the ground.

"Now," explained Jack, "if you've got a piece of twine we'll sew the edges of this hide just inside the hoop, stretching the hide all we can, and the hoop will keep it perfectly flat and stretched till it's dry."

"That's a new one on me," declared Joe. "I never knew any way of stretching a deer hide except to peg it out flat on the ground, or maybe to nail it on the side of a barn. That's mighty cute, though, the way you made the hoop by just tying the slender willow twigs around the main piece of wood. It seems firm, too, as if it were going to hold."

"Oh, it will hold all right; and it will do the work it's intended to do. You see there isn't much strain coming on any particular part of the hoop. It's evenly distributed all around, and it gives a straight outward pull to the hide. That's the way we always used to dry our beaver skins; but of course they are pretty nearly round, so that we made those hoops in the shape of a circle."

Joe went over to his bed and from his war-sack fished out a piece of twine; and before long the deer hide was nicely stretched on the hoop, carried over to the cook wagon, and put in charge of Frank, and, for safety's sake, tied to the bows at the top of the wagon.

"Well," said Joe, as they walked over to the fire, "I'm mightily obliged to you for that. If you want me to, I'd like to show you how to tan a deer hide Navajo fashion. Maybe I'll get a chance to do that before the round-up is over—that is, if you'd like to know how."

"I sure would, Joe," answered Jack. "I don't know anything about tanning myself, though I have seen a whole lot of hides dressed. It would be pretty nice to be able to make good buckskin."

About the fire almost the whole camp was gathered, the men smoking their last pipes or cigarettes, before turning in, while those who were soon to go out on night herd had already brought up their horses, which were standing saddled not far from the fire. As Jack and Tulare Joe strolled up, McIntyre called to them:

"You two kids had better get your horses now, and be ready to go out on the last relief. Do you think you can wake up at two o'clock, Jack?"

"I don't believe I can, Mr. McIntyre," Jack replied. "I'll have to get one of the boys to come in and call me."

"Well," said McIntyre, "if you're going to get up at that time, you'd better turn in quick, or else you'll be short of sleep."

CHAPTER VII

A BULL FIGHT

JACK was slow to respond to the call the next morning, but after a minute or two he reluctantly rolled out of bed, and putting on his shoes — and his coat, for the morning seemed cold — he rolled up and roped his bed. When he reached his horse he could hear Joe not far off drawing the latigo of his saddle and whistling softly to himself, and in a few minutes the two were riding off toward the cattle. The night was black and the stars sparkled in the clear air, but off to the eastern horizon the light grew constantly stronger as they rode along.

“That can’t be day coming, is it, Joe?” Jack remarked. “It seemed to me that I got up as soon as I was called, and if I did it won’t be getting light for an hour yet.”

“No,” said Joe, “that’s a little bit of the old moon left, and we’ll see it before long.”

And just before they reached the herd, the small moon, now a crescent, showed itself over the hill in the east, and for a moment the trees that crowned the hill were outlined sharply against the light.

The boys whom Jack and Joe were relieving said that the cattle had been quiet ever since they came on. The animals were tired from the drive that they had had during the day, and the night was clear,

calm and still, so there was no reason for their being uneasy. Now followed a couple of hours of monotonous riding around the herd, while one boy or the other droned out a song, and occasionally spoke as they passed. Presently the east showed gray, and then yellow, changing to orange; and at length the sun, with a bound, as it seemed, cleared the hilltop that hid it and began its journey across the sky. By this time the cattle had risen to their feet and were beginning to feed, and the herders, instead of trying to keep them in a bunch, rode out on either side, merely to prevent their straying too far.

At length the boys who were to relieve them came out, and Jack and Joe raced their horses back to camp, caught up fresh horses, unsaddled those that they had been using, and presently sat down to breakfast. All the outfit had started to work, and Frank had his wagon packed, ready to roll as soon as these last two had finished breakfast.

“McIntyre told me to tell you,” he said, “that you two had better go along and help move the herd to the next camp. That’s what you get for going on night herd—an easy job for the rest of the day.”

“That suits me well enough,” laughed Joe. “We’ll take it easy to-day, Jack, and I’ll bet McIntyre will make it up to us in the next few days, and we’ll have plenty of riding to do.”

“I hope we will,” replied Jack.

When they returned to the herd they found that the cattle had about finished feeding, and had been driven down to a little stream to drink. Now came the work of pushing them along over the ten or twelve miles to the next camp. It was a slow and more or

less wearisome task; but, as Joe said, it was all in the day's work. The cattle were full and lazy and unwilling to move. Each one would go on just as long as it was being driven, but all the others stopped. It was constantly necessary to ride up behind the little groups and urge them on, and the time of two men was spent in riding backward and forward at the tail of the herd pushing on the laggards. One man rode ahead of the herd, at a slow walk; and there was one at either side, to keep the cattle from scattering.

After the herd had been moving along for two or three hours, Bill Duncan, the man in the lead, called back something to the others; but they did not hear what he said, and, as he went on, paid no particular attention to it. A few moments later there was quite an excitement among the leading cattle. They were lowing and clustering together in a thick bunch, and as the cow punchers pushed up toward them they could see that they were pawing the ground and some of them were kneeling and thrusting their horns into the soil, and there was much commotion. Quietly, but very steadily the boys urged the cattle along and at length broke up the gathering; but the animals were excited, and the yearlings and young stock ran ahead, kicking their heels in the air and striking at each other with their horns.

After they had passed the place, the explanation of the excitement was seen. Some animal had recently been killed there, and its blood and other remains smelled by the cattle had greatly excited them.

"That must have been what Bill was talking about when he called back to us," Joe said to the others.

"We ought to have sent some one up to find out what he was saying."

"That's so," agreed Jack; "but, say, Joe, you know more about cattle than I do, what is it that makes stock stampede? Of course, it's easy enough to see why they might get frightened at the smell of blood, but I understand that sometimes they start off without any reason whatever — any reason we can see, at least."

"Well," Joe answered slowly, "you'll have to ask somebody who knows more than I do. I've seen cattle start off without any cause at all that I could see, and they 'most always start off without any reason. On a stormy night I've seen them stampede at a flash of lightning, and then again, one still night I saw a bunch start when one of the boys lighted a match for his cigarette. One fall I was helping drive a bunch of beef to the railroad; they went down into a little valley and when they got close to the stream a big flock of blackbirds flew up in a thick cloud, making, of course, some noise with their wings, and them fat beef just turned and ran for half a day. Some of the cattle we never did find, and those that we got I guess had lost fifty pounds to the head."

"I suppose," said Jack, "that it is just panic, and, of course, in a panic nothing ever stops to reason."

"I guess that's about the size of it. I've read in the papers stories about people getting scared and stampeding, just exactly the way cattle or horses do, and I reckon that all animals are a good deal alike in this, whether they go on two legs or on four."

"Why, yes," said Jack; "some of the stories I've read told about people getting scared in a theater

when it took fire, and they all seemed to lose their senses, and sometimes the firemen would find the bodies all piled up in a corner or against the wall, the under ones dead from suffocation, just the way scared sheep will pile up sometimes in the corner of the shed, when you are catching them to dip them. The men are just as bad as the women and children, and seem to try to fight with them, trying to get out first."

"Down South I once saw a bunch of mules stampede. They didn't seem to have any idea where they were going, and a part of the bunch ran right slam into a freight-car, and, of course, killed themselves."

"Well, it surely is not easy to explain these things," declared Jack. "I would like mighty well to have some of these professors who are always studying about the way the mind works tell me how the mind of a horse or a cow acts when it is stampeding."

Joe laughed.

"Hold on there," he said. "You want to get straight on that, I reckon. I never heard, and I don't believe anybody else ever did, of a horse or a cow stampeding. To have a stampede you've got to have a lot of animals together, and they act on each other and make each other more and more scared all the time. You can frighten a single horse, or a single cow, and it will run away, but it won't run far; but you stampede a bunch of stock and it will run and run and keep on running, and for a while it keeps running harder and harder, all the time."

"I see what you mean; and I guess you're right about it," conceded Jack.

One of the other boys had come up while they were talking.

“Yes,” he said, “Joe has got it straight, all right; and I never have been able to find out anything more about it than he has. I’ve heard old cow men talk about it, too, but I’ve never heard one of them say that he could understand it. Joe’s telling about seeing a bunch of stock start when a boy lit a match, reminds me of a time when I saw a bunch run just because a fellow threw down his cigarette. If a bunch of cattle is ready to run, it seems as if ’most anything would start ’em. You talk to any old cow man about this and you’ll get a whole lot of facts, but mighty few reasons.”

All day long the cattle moved on over the rolling hills. Often the wagons and *cávaya* could be seen at no very great distance; and at last, late in the afternoon, the camp was sighted and the boys took the stock down below it on the creek, let them drink, and then feed slowly back into the hills. They were kept pretty well together all the time, but would not, of course, be bedded down until near sunset. Jack and Joe stopped here with the herd, while the other boys went into camp to get their supper. They would then come out again to bed down the cattle, and be relieved a little later by the regular night herders. The cattle were hungry, and were feeding greedily. They needed little or no looking after; and the boys, riding to the top of a hill, got off their horses and, throwing down their reins and holding the ends of their ropes, let the saddle horses feed about them. As they sat there talking about various things, Joe happened to speak of southern California, and the way the Mexicans rode and handled cattle, and as they talked he told Jack something of his past life.

“My father,” he said, “came out with one of the early emigrant trains with his brothers and sisters, his father and mother having a nice little outfit of their own. Somehow or other, when they were crossing through the mountains in the late fall, just before reaching California, they got separated from the main train, and got off in a little pocket by themselves, and didn’t seem to be able to find their way out of it. I never rightly understood how it was, for my father died when I was a little fellow, but it seems that they got up there and the snow was so deep that they could not get out. Their stock was getting poor and they didn’t have enough provisions to last them through the winter. I’ve heard my grandmother tell how grandfather worried about what he ought to do, and how at last he made up his mind that he had to go down to the main trail and get help, or else they would all starve to death. He made himself a pair of snowshoes, left his rifle with his wife, took one day’s grub, and started to try to find the trail. My grandmother didn’t want him to go a bit; she was afraid that he would get lost, and then they’d be worse off than ever. If they had to die, she wanted all of them to die together.

“He started off and did get lost, but, somehow or other, he managed to get down near to the trail, and was found by a man who was hunting deer for a little train that was coming along. That train was all right. It went into camp and the men started out and broke a way up into the little valley where my grandmother was, and brought down the whole outfit and took them on to California. There my grandfather got work and did pretty well, and when my

father grew up he went down near Los Angeles, and took up a ranch there, and we have always been comfortably off. But I always wanted to ride a horse rather than go to school, and as soon as I was big enough I got work with one of the cattle companies down there, and I've been punching cows ever since. Of course I was a big fool not to go to school and get a good education instead of just being able to read and write, as I am now; but I've seen a lot of work with cows, and, I tell you, some of those greasers down there can stay with a horse and handle a rope better than any man you ever see in this country."

"I expect they're mighty fine riders, Joe; and in the old times, when there were cattle all over the country there, 'most all the men must have been great cow hands, just as I suppose they are now in Mexico. Every fellow was put on a horse as soon as he was able to toddle, and I suppose he stayed with it until he was an old man."

"Yes, if he didn't get killed before he grew old. Hold on, Jack! Watch those bulls down there!" Joe exclaimed. "I think we're going to have a scrap!"

For some time Jack had heard low rumblings coming from the bunch of cattle but had paid no attention to them; but now he saw that a couple of big bulls seemed to be making preparations for a fight. One of them was a white-faced red and white animal which might be a grade Durham or Hereford, while the other, solid red in color, looked more like one of the old-fashioned long-horned Texans, or at least what they used to call out in that country a Cherokee.

Fifteen years earlier, as Jack had often been told, almost all the cattle in the country were Texas cattle

driven up from the south to the plains, and there purchased by the northern cattlemen, taken out to their ranches, fed for a year or two, and then shipped to market. The excellent grazing and the cold winters seemed to make these cattle grow larger and fatter than the Texas cattle were, and they brought good prices in Chicago. Moreover, the calves raised on the northern range were bigger and better than those brought up from the south, and it was not long before the northern cattle owners got into the way of buying herds of Texas cows and grading them up with more or less well-bred bulls. This course made a very great change in the cattle. They grew larger in body, shorter in limb, lost their long horns and became far more like real beef steers than the old Texas long-horns ever were. It was now getting to be almost unusual to see an animal that looked like a Texas long-horn, or even like a Cherokee steer.

One of these bulls, however, was of the old type, while the other seemed to represent the new. The two stood facing each other, not very far apart, muttering, moaning, pawing up the dust and throwing it high in the air to fall on their broad backs and roll back to the ground. Presently the short-horned bull went down on his knees and thrust his horns into the earth, and then rose and shook the dirt from his head. The other bull did the same thing, his long horns tearing up a great mass of soil, and when he rose to his feet his shaggy face and head were covered with dirt and sticks picked up from the ground. Slowly the bulls drew nearer to each other, and at length, when but a few feet apart, the red bull sprang forward; the other bent down and lunged to meet

him, and their horns came together with a sharp clash. The shock affected neither bull; neither gave back; and for some moments they pushed and pushed against each other, their feet plowing up the soil and the tense corded muscles standing out like ridges on their great hams.

The remainder of the herd had drawn off a little to one side. Most of the animals were still feeding or looking off over the prairie, heeding the battle not at all, but a little fringe of cows and young stock on the edge of the herd faced the fighting bulls and looked at them with mild interest.

Jack and Joe watched the fight eagerly.

"The chances are all in favor of the big bull," declared Joe. "He's got the weight and he'll win out."

"I don't know," said Jack. "It looks to me as if he were going to push the red bull all over the prairie; but, on the other hand, the little one is twice as quick and twice as active. What's more, I'll bet the red fellow has twice the wind of the other, and if he can tire out that big fat bull he'll make him run."

"Yes," agreed Joe, "there's no doubt that if he's got the wit to work the fight right, he'll be able to drive the big bull; but if the big bull is smart, he won't let himself be tired out."

"Well, let's see. Look at the way the big fellow is pushing back the little fellow now!"

And certainly it seemed as if weight were beginning to tell, for, little by little, the red bull moved backward, and appeared to be quite unable to hold his opponent. In the meantime, the horns of both bulls began to show red as if smeared with blood.

Farther and farther the red bull was pushed back. Presently he stopped resisting; by a nimble bound he sprang off to one side and, quickly circling, returned to the attack, as if trying to gore the big bull in the neck or shoulders. The big one had turned, however, and received the shock on his horns; and this time without much delay he pushed his enemy back. The red bull again jumped and again made a circle, and the big bull, seeing what was intended, faced to receive the charge on his horns. The two came together hard, and the sound of the shock was plainly heard. By this time both were weary and winded, and their long tongues hung out of their mouths and almost reached to the ground.

It seemed now as if the red bull were trying to do precisely what Jack had spoken of a little while before—to tire out his stronger opponent—and it soon began to look as if he were succeeding. The big bull turned more slowly to receive the charge; and, while he had not as yet received any noticeable wound, he looked as if he would like to stop fighting, and to call the battle a draw. He began to look from one side to the other, and at last it was evident that he was trying to get away.

“By gosh! the little fellow has got him whipped!” Joe cried.

A moment or two later the big bull, when he had the opportunity, turned tail and trotted heavily off over the prairie away from the herd. The little one followed him, of course, and butted him in the hips with great force but his wide-spread horns did not cut the flesh. Each time the red bull hit his opponent,

the big bull roared with fear, and the sight greatly amused the cowboys.

“Come on,” Joe said at last; “we mustn’t let those fellows go too far. They’ve got to be brought back to the bunch.”

Jumping on their horses they followed the two, first turning the red bull, which was loath to leave the pursuit. Joe hurried him back to the herd, while Jack rode on a little way, turned the big bull, and slowly drove him to the bunch.

Soon after this, and long before they had finished talking over the fight, the other men came back from camp, and Joe and Jack went in to get their supper.

CHAPTER VIII

A BUFFALO STORY

Two days later Jack, pretty tired and riding a tired horse, came into camp after a long day, and was delighted to see Hugh standing by the cook fire, as usual smoking his pipe. Jack shouted a greeting and Hugh waved his pipe in salutation, and a moment later when the saddle had been thrown on the ground, and the tired horse was rolling, the two shook hands.

“Well,” exclaimed Jack, “what’s the news? Did anything happen to you on your way back with the cattle?”

“No,” answered Hugh; “we just pushed ’em along as fast as we comfortably could, brought ’em to camp late at night, pretty tired, and didn’t bother to bed ’em down or watch ’em. They got in hungry, and as soon as they had eaten a plenty they lay down and stayed down all night. When we got within five or six miles of the ranch I sent Rube in ahead and pushed the cattle on myself, and before very long your Uncle and Joe came out and we drove the herd down below the little lake and turned ’em loose there. That was yesterday afternoon pretty early. Rube and I went up to the bunk-house and gossiped a while with Mr. Sturgis, and then after we had had something to eat, we turned around and rode until dark and then camped, and came on here to-day.”

“That was a good quiet trip,” said Jack. “I am glad that nothing bad happened. There was no reason why anything should happen, for these cattle are almost on their own range; and they shouldn’t be wild or uneasy. What’s the news back at the ranch, Hugh? Did Uncle Will, or Joe, have anything special to talk about?”

“Not a thing,” was the reply. “It’s just as quiet there as can be. Joe’s ’tending to his stock, what little of it there is there, and Mr. Sturgis, I reckon, just reads and writes. By the way, though, he did tell me that he went up on the mountains back of the house the other day and killed a yearling for meat. He said there were lots of elk there — big bunches of cows and calves. When I told him I was coming right back here, he sat down and wrote to you and asked me to take the letter along with two or three others that had come for you. You see, he sent Joe into the railroad for mail only two or three days ago.”

Jack took the letters, and presently went off to read them. Two were from his father and mother, in New York, and one from his uncle. By the time he had finished reading them, supper was ready and the boys were crowding around the fire, filling their plates and cups.

After supper, Hugh, Joe and Jack were sitting together near the cook fire, Hugh smoking and the boys slapping viciously at the mosquitoes, which were pretty bad.

“I saw one thing to-day, son,” said Hugh, “that interested me a little, and that was a buffalo carcass.”

“Why, Hugh,” exclaimed Jack, “I didn’t know there were any buffalo about here. Of course, I’ve

heard that there is a little bunch up in the Rattlesnake Mountains, but I've never seen any sign down this way."

"No," returned Hugh; "I don't guess there are any buffalo around here. The carcass to-day is the first I've seen for six or seven years. I remember about the time you first came out to the ranch we ran across a buffalo that had been killed not very long before. I figured that it had wandered out from the Rattlesnake Mountains and crossed the Platte, but I never knew what had killed it. I don't know what killed this one that I found to-day. It was killed this spring sometime, but had been dead too long for me to find out much about it. I wouldn't be surprised if there were a very few buffalo up in the Rattlesnake hills; and every now and then, if one comes out and goes down to the Platte River, somebody takes a shot or two at it, and it gets killed. I haven't heard of anybody killing a buffalo around here for a good many years.

"I reckon I've told you, son, about what Uncle Jack Robinson used to say about buffalo on the Laramie Plains, and in this high country, away back long before I came out here, and in fact I guess when Uncle Jack was quite a young man — anyway, not more than a middle-aged man. He said that in his young days, when he first came into the country, the Laramie Plains and all this high country was full of buffalo, but that one winter there came a terrible snowstorm without any wind, and the snow lay four or five feet deep on the ground. After this snow came a change of weather, either a big thaw or a warm rain, and then a freeze, and the whole country was crusted over

so that none of the animals could get down to the grass to feed. That winter, Uncle Jack said, killed just about everything in the country and, among the other things, the buffalo. He said that since that time there never had been any buffalo on the Laramie Plains, or in this high country. I always figured from what he told me that this big storm must have come in the winter of 1839-40. Uncle Jack said that for years after that it was hard to find any game up in this country, but, of course, as time went on the deer and the elk and the antelope got plentiful again, but the buffalo never came back."

"I suppose the fact is, Hugh," said Jack, "that by that time the people on the plains were killing them so that they had no chance to work back into the mountains."

"Likely that was so," assented Hugh.

"There's another thing about buffalo I want to ask you," said Jack; "though I think you've told me about it before. Some of the old books talk, as I remember it, about buffalo spending the summer up in the north, and then migrating south in the fall, spending the winter down in Texas or Mexico, and then going back again when spring came. I'm pretty sure you told me once that there was never anything like this."

"No," answered Hugh, "there never was; and if you'll think about it a little bit you'll see there couldn't be. It's a long way from the Canada line down to Mexico, and just as far back again. If the buffalo made journeys like that spring and fall, they'd never have time to do anything else, and they sure would never be fat. Of course buffalo shifted their ranges

more or less, spring and fall. They'd move up into the high country on the flanks of the mountains, and often up mountain valleys in summer, and then in fall they'd drift east on to the prairie and get into breaks or broken country of one kind and another, and stop there. Sometimes they'd make quite long journeys and it would be hard for the Indians to find them, but they never started off to travel a thousand miles or so to avoid cold weather, and then turned round and came back to avoid hot weather.

“The buffalo didn't mind the cold very much; on the other hand, they like shelter in the worst weather. I've seen places on the flanks of the mountains in the broken country where the buffalo wintered—places they used to go to for shelter in the worst storms—where you would find the dung four or five feet deep. I remember one such place in a little side ravine running into a draw that goes down into the Rosebud, where I took the trouble to dig down into the dry dung, and I made a hole half as deep as I am tall, and didn't get to the bottom then. This was a sheltered place under thick pine trees, and all the signs showed that the buffalo used to gather there to get out of the wind and snow, and stand there pretty nearly as warm as they would be in a barn. Right within half a mile there was the best kind of feed.”

“Don't you remember, Hugh,” interrupted Jack, “that year we went up to the head of the St. Mary's River, how you showed me the place where the sheep used to come down and stand in winter?”

“Sure,” said Hugh. “That's another sort of an animal, but it shows what I've said to you before, that

all animals, except those that are hunting other animals, are very likely to live in a small range of country, and not to get away from it except at some change of the seasons, or when they are driven away. It's just the same with range stock—cows or horses. You ask Joe here, and I reckon he'll tell you the same thing."

"That's so," asserted Joe. "Everybody knows that a few horses will stop in a particular place and live there all through the summer, or all through the winter; they always drink at the same stream; they always feed about the same place; they go up on the same high point to stand and look. It's something like that, too, with the cattle; and I reckon it's that way with all animals."

"That's what I believe," said Hugh; "and I can tell you a story about something that I saw once, and that plenty of other people saw too, that seems to me to prove it.

"In the fall of 1866 I was working for the government, sort of half scout and half general handy man, and went with Lieutenant Stouch—a mighty fine officer he was—down into Kansas to build up old Fort Fletcher, which was on the north fork of Big Creek, and about sixteen miles below Fort Hayes.

"It was nice, bright, cool fall weather, and when we got to the place that had been picked out for the Fort, and went into camp, we saw quite a bunch of buffalo feeding in the stream bottom, hardly more than half a mile above us. Of course the country then was full of buffalo, and this was one of their great ranges. I suppose there must have been eight or nine hundred in this bunch.

“When Lieutenant Stouch saw this herd, he had what always struck me as a mighty smart thought, and a thought too that showed that he knew a whole lot about animals, and about the plains country; and yet he hadn't been out there very long, because the war was only just over and he'd fought through the war. It occurred to him not to meddle with these buffalo and that just as long as they stopped where they were, he could get fresh meat for his command with mighty little trouble. So he gave orders to the soldiers not to hunt up the creek, but to do their hunting downstream, and especially not to do anything to frighten these buffalo.

“He picked out a man and sent him to go up the creek to kill a buffalo, but told him not to show himself before he shot, nor after; just to kill the cow and then stay there hid, until a wagon came up for the meat. The man obeyed orders. When he fired, the buffalo he had shot at ran a few steps, and then stopped and lay down. Those nearest to it gave a jump or two and looked around, but as they saw no one they went on feeding.

“They were watching in camp, and when they saw what had happened they sent out a wagon to bring in the meat, and as it drove up slowly to the place, the buffalo near it just walked out of the way. The dead animal was butchered and loaded into the wagon and brought back to camp.

“This happened every day. Nothing occurred to scare the buffalo. They got used to seeing the people at work on the buildings and got used to the wagons.

“After a while, a couple more companies of sol-

diers came to the post; one company of cavalry and one of infantry. Lieutenant Stouch told the officers what he had been doing, and asked them to follow out the same plan. They did so, and the buffalo stopped right there. This went on until well into the winter, when one day in the morning Lieutenant Stouch sent for me and told me that a sergeant who had just come in from a scout had reported that he had met our buffalo herd traveling up the creek about fifteen miles distant. The Lieutenant told me he believed that these buffalo could be brought back, and asked me what I thought about it. I told him I didn't know, but they ought to be mighty tame, and I believed that they could just quietly be driven back.

“ ‘Well, Johnson,’ he said to me, ‘I believe so too, and we're going to try it.’

“ He took about twenty-five soldiers, and three or four of the officers went along, and we rode off up the creek, and after a while passed the herd and went down into the valley above it. There we scattered out all the way across the bottom like skirmishers, and commenced to walk slowly toward the buffalo. When they first saw us they stood and looked for quite a long time, and I thought it was mighty uncertain whether they would drive or whether they would run off over the bluffs, but after a little those that were nearest to us turned around and began to feed down the valley, working back the way they had come, and before night we had the bunch back on its old feeding ground just above the post, and when it got there we rode out of the valley and round over the hills to camp.

“ That bunch of buffalo stayed there for two

months longer, and for all I know they would have been there yet, if it hadn't been that, along in April, the Seventh Cavalry, under General Custer, came into the post for supplies, and some of his command ran into those buffalo and chased them to kill meat for the command, and they scattered out and never came back again.

"That bunch of buffalo stayed there in that one place for about six months, not scared, although animals enough were killed out of it to supply a hundred and fifty officers and men with fresh meat during all that time. I reckon there was an animal killed every day or two; only they were killed in a sensible way and the herd was never frightened."

"Well, well," said Joe; "that seems to me one of the strangest things I ever heard of; and it just shows how near buffalo are to being cattle. You can imagine a thing of that kind happening to a bunch of cows, but it's new to me that it could happen to buffalo."

"It seems to me," replied Hugh, "that it shows that wild animals don't spend all their time wandering over the country, as most people think they do, but each set of animals has some little range of country that's like home to them."

"Yes," said Jack, "I guess that's the fact; and yet I believe most people don't understand it at all. I've heard my uncle say the same thing about wild animals, and about some kinds of birds. I mean birds like partridges and quail, that don't go south in winter, the way most birds do."

"Well," exclaimed Hugh, "the fact is that most people don't know anything at all about how wild

animals live, and of course they can't have right ideas about 'em. But here I've taken a whole lot of sleeping time talking to you boys about animals! We'd better quit now and turn in."

CHAPTER IX

VICENTE, COW HAND

It was plain daylight, but the sun had not risen, when Vicente, Tulare Joe and Jack set out from the camp to ride circle through the rough hills to the north-east. They would gather whatever cattle they could find and bring them to the camp, which would be moved a short distance farther during the day.

Vicente was a Mexican, of at least middle age. His hair and mustache were jet black, but his side-whiskers were gray. With his stiff conical black hat and a little military cape which he often wore, sitting erect in his saddle, with an air of great dignity, he looked more like a Spanish hidalgo than an everyday cowboy of the plains. No one knew Vicente's history, nor where he came from. This was not especially because he was a silent man, for in fact he often talked quite freely, but however much he talked, he himself was never the subject of his conversation.

Notwithstanding his dignity, his unusual clothing and his more or less precise and elaborate manner, Vicente was a wonderful cow hand. If anything especially difficult had to be done, he was usually called upon to do it. If some steers had to be handled in a small corral, Vicente was likely to ride into the corral on his favorite gray roping horse, and to pick out one animal after another, throw and tie it, and

then when all hands on foot had gotten through with it, and had bolted for the fence, Vicente would untie the steer and dodge it until it wearied of the effort to fight him and went back to crowd in among the other animals.

The younger cowboys stood somewhat in awe of Vicente, and never tried to play jokes on him, nor made fun of him as they did of each other; though of course they cheered and shouted if by chance he mounted a horse which bucked with unusual ferocity. No horse, however vicious, energetic or long-winded had as yet been found, so far as any one on this round-up knew, that was able to stir Vicente from his saddle.

Hugh once said that only once in his life had he seen a man who rode as well and as certainly as Vicente. This was an old Mexican known as "One-Eyed Juan" who used to live down at Bent's Old Fort on the Arkansas. It was said that if a particularly bad horse had to be ridden down there at Bent's Fort — one that none of the Mexicans or Indians could do anything with — Juan would mount it, and putting a silver dollar between the sole of each foot and the stirrup, would ride the beast to a standstill, and when he dismounted the silver dollars were always found in the stirrups. One who saw Vicente ride a bad horse could believe this story. He rode in quite a different way from the American cow punchers, even those who were never thrown. Some of them lopped about on the horse, riding on one thigh or the other, and some seemed wholly unconcerned as to what the horse did; but, while they rode well, and were never shaken from their seats, they

did not ride gracefully, firmly and steadily as did Vicente.

The three men rode fast to the edge of the hills, and had little to say to each other, but when they reached the point where they must separate to look for the cattle, Joe and Jack, by common consent, turned to the older man and asked him for instructions. Vicente's English was extraordinary and, until one was familiar with it, not easy to understand; but, brokenly as he spoke, every one in this cow camp understood him, as indeed did every one in all the region round about, for he had lived here for a long time, and on all the range was a well-known personage.

"How shall we work, Vicente?" asked Joe. "You tell us and we'll try to do as you say."

"It looks to me best," Vicente answered, "that Joe rides along the edge of the hills looking up the valleys; and you, Jack, ride a mile or two back from the edge; and I'll go still farther back toward the divide, maybe up on the divide — anyhow, so as to see the heads of all the coulées. What cattle Joe finds and what cattle I find we'll drive along and turn down to Jack, and Jack will push along the bunch, while we try to get all the cows that are feeding in these ravines."

"We'll do that," said Joe; "and that means that I turn off now before we've gone very far, and take in these lower hills."

After they had ridden a mile farther, Joe turned to the north or northwest, while Jack and Vicente kept on until the Mexican pointed out a place where he said Jack had better start north by himself, while he went farther on.

Jack sat for a moment watching the little horse swinging easily along up the hill under the erect military figure; and then, turning to his left, he started to gallop over the ridges and ravines that cut the slopes. It was killing work for a horse, up and down, up and down, up and down. As much as he could, Jack tried to save his animal by taking the hills at an angle, but even at best it was such hard work that Jack felt obliged often to stop, to let the horse rest and breathe.

For some time he rode on without seeing any cattle, but presently in a narrow valley, where evidently water had stood late into the spring, he saw ten or a dozen cows and young stock feeding on a little flat from which they had nipped off all the tall grass, so that at a distance the green carpet looked as if it had been gone over by a lawn-mower.

The cattle saw him almost as soon as he saw them, and seemed wilder than any he had previously come across. In a moment their heads were down, and their tails up and they were bolting across the ridges at a lively gait. Their direction was just that which Jack was taking, or perhaps they bore off a little to the left, which would bring them down more toward Joe's line. At all events, there was no reason to hurry after them, for they would certainly be gathered by one of the three men.

As Jack looked up toward the hill he could occasionally see Vicente crossing an open space, going at a good rate and apparently thinking nothing of his horse. Yet, oddly enough — and Jack as well as others of the round-up boys had often wondered at it — Vicente's horses, even though he had a string of

only six and seemed to work them twice as hard as any other horses on the round-up, were always in good spirits, fat and springy. Now and then on the hillside above, and always in advance of Vicente, he could see little bunches of cattle hurrying along. He kept a sharp lookout to his right, thinking that possibly some of those being driven by the Mexican might turn off and drift down the hill in his direction, and if they did so he did not wish to go so far, or so carelessly, as to leave them behind.

Keeping his eye out warily, both up and down the hill, he presently saw above him, rushing diagonally to the front, five black-tail deer, none of them with horns — apparently an old doe, two yearlings and two spotted fawns. They had been startled either by Vicente or by the cattle he was driving, and now were making great time down the hill and toward safety. Even for them the work of crossing these ridges was tiring, and before long Jack could see that the old doe's tongue was hanging out of her mouth and that she was beginning to lose her wind. Jack had no cattle immediately in front of him, and he was riding down into a rather wide valley with a flat bottom. As the deer were drawing near, and would apparently cross in front of him, he put his horse into a fast gallop in order to reach the top of the next ridge about the time the deer got there. This he succeeded in doing, and as he rode up on top of the ridge and drew rein just below some scrubby pine trees, he could see the deer coming at a gallop along the top of this ridge, apparently intending to follow it down to the lower country, instead of continuing their way across the ravines. Jack was partly hid-

den by the trees, and was making no movement. The deer kept on along the ridge, slackening their pace as they got near to him, until just before they reached the pine trees the two leading does were trotting, the two fawns had almost stopped and the old doe was coming along heavily in the rear. By the pines they all stopped and looked back up the hill, as if to try to learn what had become of the cause of their alarm. They were so close to Jack that he could readily have thrown a rope over the head of any one of them. Their red flanks were heaving and the old doe was quite tired. The little fawns, which could not have been more than six weeks or two months old, were the embodiment of grace and lightness.

After looking back for a moment or two, the deer seemed to feel that there was nothing more to fear from the enemy that had frightened them up the hill. Two or three times they looked at Jack, but neither he nor his horse moved, and after a stare or two the deer looked unconcernedly away. Presently, with a slow, almost slouching, gait, they started to walk on down the ridge toward some underbrush on the hillside; and in doing this they crossed the wind which was blowing from the southeast, and so, in their changed position, blew from Jack to them. As each deer walked into this tainted current it bounded into the air as if shot up by a gigantic spring, and coming down again, the headlong flight was resumed with every appearance of terror. It was not the first time that Jack had seen something of this sort, and Hugh had more than once spoken to him of the effect of the scent of man on wild animals; but to-day Jack wondered at it as much as he had ever done

before. The deer had looked squarely at him without recognizing him as anything dangerous or hostile, but the instant that their noses told them that he was there, they raced off in headlong flight.

A few more ridges surmounted, and Jack came again upon the little bunch of cattle that he had started in the morning. Though still wild, they did not rush off in the same alarm that they had shown earlier in the day. Above them on the hillside and near the head of the same ravine were other cattle lying on the steep side hill, and Jack, riding up, started them on their way. These animals had evidently just lain down after feeding, and were not at all wild. It seemed probable to Jack that he might have to do some literal cow punching with these logy beasts, and he took them down the hill with him and started them forward about in the line that he was riding.

All through the morning this went on, and Jack had gathered forty or fifty head of cattle, while from what he could see on the hillside above him Vicente had a still larger bunch. It was impossible to get any idea of what Joe was doing, because the slope here was too gradual.

In the early afternoon it was evident that Vicente had turned his cattle down the hill toward Jack. Many of them showed themselves working down ahead of him, and now and then he could hear the whistles and calls by which Vicente was urging them on.

It was not long after this that Vicente was seen hurrying along the hillside up and down, gathering the cattle into a more or less close bunch, and then

starting them down a ridge ahead of Jack. A little later, too, Jack began to see cattle coming from his left—from down the hill. He therefore stopped where he was, and getting up on as high a point as possible, looked over the ground to get an idea of the situation. Evidently this had been a pretty fruitful gather, for there must have been more than three hundred cattle brought along by Vicente and by Joe, and as yet it was only a little after noon.

After a time, as the animals got together in a fairly close bunch ahead of Jack, Vicente rode up to him; and presently Joe appeared from a ravine. The three stopped and got off and sat down on the ground, and Joe and Vicente rolled cigarettes. The tired horses panted and the sweat dropped from their saddle cinches.

“Lots of cattle here,” said Vicente. “We bring in big bunch to-night; hard on the horses, though. Lots of places in this rough country where cattle can hide.”

“Yes,” agreed Joe, “that’s sure so. I ought to have a fresh horse now; mine’s near give out.”

“Well,” said Jack, “I’ve been having an easy time, I reckon. I haven’t done much of anything except to keep right straight ahead. My horse is tired too, but not so tired as those you two have been riding.”

“Suppose we get lot more cattle,” said Vicente; “we’ll have a bunch too big for you to handle; then we’ll have to take ’em out of the hills and drive ’em to camp; but we’ve not much farther to go now.”

“No,” answered Jack; “I suppose it’s not much farther, and I guess we can keep these going all right; but I’ll have my work cut out for me if any of these

cattle should be mean and try to break back, as they are liable to. I'll have to do some riding myself."

"Some of these cattle are pretty wild," said Vicente. "I started three or four bunches that tried hard to break back, but now that they're together in a big bunch they'll be easier to handle. Only, Jack, look out and don't lose any in these ravines."

"All right; I'll try," Jack promised.

A little later, the three mounted again and Jack rode down toward the cattle and put the bunch in motion. It was slow work to get them started, but as Jack went along he could see from the tops of the ridges he crossed that the range of hills along which they had been working bent away to the east just ahead of him, and that before long he would have the cattle on smoother ground where it would be easier to watch them and to keep them traveling straight. Now the ravines began to grow wider and shallower. Joe joined him with a few more head, and at length they got the bunch out into fairly flat country. A little later, Vicente was seen off to the right coming with a few more cows; and presently the herd with the three riders guiding it was traveling slowly along under its cloud of dust toward the camp, which they could now see ahead of them.

The sun was still pretty high above the western horizon when they drove the cattle down to the stream to drink, and after that began to work them over to where the main herd was feeding.

"I suppose," Jack said to Vicente, "that now we have got so many cattle we'll have to spend a day or two cutting and branding calves."

"Yes," replied Vicente; "I think so. Seems to

me I saw a big lot of strays in this bunch that we've got ahead of us. Not many brands of people around here. I don't know where they come from. Some of the brands I don't know."

"That's right," put in Joe. "I've seen plenty of brands that are new to me. Say, Vicente," he went on, "there's a big fat maverick heifer among those that I gathered. I wonder if McIntyre wouldn't like to kill her for beef?"

"You sure she's got no brand on?" asked Vicente.

"Yes, I'm sure."

"Suppose you ride to camp and ask McIntyre, and maybe we can cut her out before we get to the herd."

"All right," said Joe; and galloped off in the direction of the camp.

Before long he returned, riding a fresh horse.

"McIntyre says to bring that maverick over to the camp, and we'll kill her there," he reported.

No sooner said than done. Vicente and Joe pushed their horses into the bunch of cattle and before long had cut out the unbranded heifer, which was very fat, and were driving her back to the camp. A little later the herd Jack was driving mingled with the main herd, and he also turned toward camp; but before he got there he heard a shot, and as he rode into the camp he could see two of the boys dressing the young cow.

CHAPTER X

THE FENCELESS LAND

THE next day Jack was ordered to travel with the herd in company with Jack Mason and Rube. Mason was a man who had not been long in this part of the country. He was not a pilgrim, for he had been born among the mountains of the West, and had spent all his life in the fenceless country. As a very young man he had worked his way up to the north, and for several years had lived on or near the Blackfeet Reservation, and Hugh knew him well. When he found him in the round-up camp Hugh had spoken of him to Jack in high terms.

“He’s harum-scarum,” he had said, “but he’s a good prairie man, and I don’t think he’s afraid of anything that wears hair or feathers. He does not always believe in obeying laws that he does not approve of, and I’ve heard he has been in trouble once or twice on that account; but he’s a square man, and a man that it’s safe for you to know, and to tie to under ordinary conditions. Sometimes, however, he goes off half-cocked, and when he does that I shouldn’t want you to tie to him. He’s a man that’s growing better every day, but he needs experience and balance, and I don’t believe there’s any way for Jack Mason to get that, except by living in the world and find-

ing out for himself a whole lot of things that he don't know yet.

“There's another thing about Mason,” Hugh went on; “he's terrible stout, quick with his hands, and quite a wrestler. I mind the only time I ever saw him wrestle. The fellow that tackled him got a handful. It was at the Blackfeet Agency. A big husky chap came over from Canada and went around blowing about how good he could wrestle. He threw the blacksmith, who was pretty stout, and a big Indian that was persuaded to try him, and after he had done that he talked louder than ever. He was an Englishman that had been in the mounted police. Finally somebody who had seen Mason in a scuffle told the man that he couldn't throw Mason, and the Englishman wanted to bet he could, and at last got all worked up about it. Mason kept refusing and dodging and putting off, until the Englishman was about crazy to make a match, and at last Mason said he would go him. They put up five dollars a side to wrestle on the flat out in front of the stockade. When they got hold of each other, the Englishman started in to throw Mason quick, but however hard he tried, he didn't seem to stir him out of his tracks. But suddenly, while they were all watching and wondering what was going to happen, Mason give a kind of a twist and threw the Englishman over his head, and he lit on his back three or four steps away, with the wind all knocked out of him. It took five or ten minutes to bring him to, and then he was only just able to walk, and had to be helped back into the stockade. He didn't talk much about wrestling after that, and left in the course of two or three days.

“ You notice Mason sometime when he’s in swimming and see his arms and shoulders, and the pins he’s got under him. He’s stout, I tell you.”

Mason was a good cow hand and a most cheery, delightful fellow. No matter how gloomy the situation, how hard the rain poured or the cold wind blew, he whistled and sang in hearty fashion, made jokes and laughed at those of others, and altogether got out of life a great deal of enjoyment.

Those who were to drive the herd went out early to relieve the night herders. They were in no haste to start the cattle, which were given some time to feed before being pushed along to the next camp. While the cattle were feeding they needed no special attention for they were not likely to try to wander until they had eaten their fill. So the three herders got together on a knoll from which a good view of the country could be had, and sat there watching the stock as it fed. Rube whittled tobacco, and time and again filled his old black pipe; but the two Jacks, being non-smokers, looked over the wide plain before them, and noted, as one may note if one sits down and stares at a landscape, the various things that were happening among the wild dwellers of that landscape.

Scarcely half a mile to the north was an old doe antelope which in the early morning light had seemed much interested in the cattle and trotted down toward them on a tour of inspection. Those who saw her felt pretty sure that hidden somewhere in the neighborhood she had a couple of little kids; and sure enough after the old mother had satisfied herself that there was no danger in those great groups of

dark animals, her two tiny young ones came out from their hiding-place and played around her.

Along a distant hillside off to the south, Jack Mason's keen eye detected a moving object, and after watching it for a while he turned to Jack.

"There goes a wolf, traveling back after his night's hunting to find a place to lie by during the day," he said.

After it had been pointed out, they could see the great beast trotting smoothly along over the prairie toward some bushy ravines higher up on the hill.

"Except for the cattle and the wild animals," Mason said, "there's not much to be seen here."

"Not much," answered Jack. "It's lonely; but I like the very lonesomeness of it."

"Yes," responded Mason; "so do I. I don't know anything much better than to ride along over the prairie, or to sit alone on top of the hill and just see what goes on all about you. Most people wouldn't see anything, but the man that has got his eyes open sees a whole lot."

"Ho!" put in Rube, "you fellows talk as if you had never before been where it was lonely. I have; and there's too much loneliness out here for me. I'm getting to be like the fellow I heard of who was riding fence down in Texas on one of those big fenced ranches. He never saw anybody from week-end to week-end, and one time when he came into a ranch to get his supplies, he said it was so darned lonely out there that he'd got into the habit of taking off his hat and saying 'Howdy' to every fence post that he passed."

"Well," laughed Mason, "he must have suffered

for lack of company; but I would never have that complaint."

"Hugh tells me that you've lived up in the Piegan country," said Jack, addressing Mason. "Were you up there long?"

"Three or four years. I expect I'll go back there before long. Six or eight years ago I drifted up from the south through this country, and finally brought up among the Piegans. I've been across the line a few times to the British, and have stopped a little while with the Bloods and the north Piegans. You know that in old times, when the first treaties were made, the Piegans split up on the question of where they should live. Some of them liked the country to the south of the line, and some that to the north. Originally all the three tribes of the Blackfeet came from way up north on the Red Deer River, or maybe still farther, to the east of that. I've heard old John Monroe — maybe you know him —"

"I should say so!" exclaimed Jack. "I lived in his lodge all one summer."

"Well," continued Mason, "I've heard old John Monroe tell a mighty good story about the way the Blackfeet came down from the northeast, and how they first met the white people."

Here Rube interrupted.

"I think we had better start these cows along. A lot of 'em have quit feeding and the first thing we know they'll be lying down, and then we'll have a hard time to get them to move. Better come on and start 'em now. The longer we put it off the harder work and slower it'll be."

"That's gospel," said Jack Mason. "We've got

to whoop these cows up, and we haven't any time for writing ancient history now."

"Yes," agreed Jack, "I suppose we've got to move; but look here, Mason, I want to get you to tell me that story, if you will. I've an idea that I've heard bits of it up North, but if you can give it to me in a connected fashion I wish you would."

"Why sure," Mason answered. "I'd like to tell it to you the best I can; but you know very well that I can't tell it the way old John Monroe could. He's half Indian and that means that he's a natural sign talker; and then he's got a dash of French in him, that makes him willing to talk, and he talks well; and then I expect the Scotch — for old Hugh Monroe's father must have been Scotch, if the name counts for anything — gives him a sense of humor. So he's a rattling good story-teller. Of course, for me, and maybe for you, he's sometimes a little hard to understand, because he talks a language made up of English, French, Cree and Blackfeet. Sometimes I miss the connection, but his stories are always good. The best ones that I ever heard, though, were those that he told in Cree to Billy Jackson, and that Billy Jackson interpreted for me, for Jackson is no slouch of a story-teller himself."

As they talked, the men rode over toward the cattle and going about them started those that were lying down and at last got the whole bunch moving very slowly in the direction they wished them to go. Among the cattle were three or four partially crippled animals that had been lamed either by the horns of other cows in the crowding, or by falling in bad places. Most of the hurts were trifling and would soon pass

away, but there was one two-year-old steer that had a very bad shoulder and could use only one foreleg. He could get along very slowly and with difficulty. As Rube and Jack passed each other, riding to and fro to keep the stock going, Rube pointed to the steer.

"I hate to drive that cripple," he said; "and I'd leave him in a minute if I wasn't afraid that the wolves or coyotes would kill him to-night."

"Yes," answered Jack; "I am afraid if he were left behind he would never see the morning light; even a bunch of coyotes could kill him without any trouble, for just as soon as they crippled his hind legs, he would fall over and they would eat him alive."

"I reckon," decided Rube, "the best that we can do is to keep him going, and if we get him into camp to-night, we'll let McIntyre say what shall be done with him."

About noon the boys came to a stream and, driving the cattle down to it, made up their minds that they would give them an hour or two of rest. When Mason came up, Jack spoke to him about the crippled steer and asked what he thought about it, repeating what he and Rube had said a little while before.

"You're right about that," said Mason. "I don't believe he'd last out the night; for, as you say, the coyotes would kill him. If he were well, he could stand off a bunch of coyotes, but as he is, he wouldn't last long. You talk about crippling up his hind legs. Do you savvy, Jack, how it is that a buffalo or a steer, or a cow, gets hamstrung?"

"I always supposed that a wolf just bit through that big tendon that runs down from the ham to the

hock, and, of course, if that's cut or broken that cripples that leg entirely."

"Right you are," said Mason, "up to a certain point; but did it ever occur to you how big and tough that tendon is, and did you ever stop to think whether a wolf could bite through it with one snap of his jaws?"

"No; I confess that I never did. But now that you speak of it, it looks to me like a pretty good-sized contract for any animal to bite through that tendon at a single snap."

"That's what it is," answered Mason. "If you ever get a chance to try a knife on that tendon you'll find that unless the knife is sharp like a razor you'll have to put in a good deal of force, and do some little sawing to get the blade through the tendon. We all know that a wolf is big and strong and that he can bite tremendously hard, and that he's got sharp teeth. I believe that maybe a wolf has force enough in his jaws to break a man's wrist, if he caught it just at the right point, but I don't believe that there ever was a wolf whelped that was able to cut through that tendon at a single snap, unless by accident. Of course, he might partly cut through it, and the animal's struggles might break it, but I don't believe that would happen once in a thousand times. The way the wolves hamstring these animals, so far as I've been able to see, is by biting that tendon over and over again, and before long it gets all bruised and more or less shredded, and swells up and stiffens, and the animal is not able to use his leg. If this happens to one or both legs, the first thing you know the animal is down and that's the end of it."

"Well, that's news to me," declared Jack. "I never thought of that before. I always just took it for granted that a wolf, because he is big and strong, could and did cut through that tendon by a snap of his jaws; but the way you put it, it looks to me as if that would not be possible."

"I've seen a number of cases," Mason continued, "where animals have been killed by wolves and I've always been interested in hearing about this hamstringing, so I've paid particular attention to the condition of that part of the leg, trying to see whether the tendon was ever cut, and I never have seen a case when it was cut."

"That's a new idea to me," repeated Jack. "I'd like to get more light on it. Did you ever talk about it to Hugh? He's been on the prairie an awful long time."

"No; I don't think that I ever talked about it to anybody at all; but I'm like you, I'd like to know whether it is gospel or not. At all events, it's what I've seen, and I think it's reason, too."

"It does seem reasonable," said Jack. "Let's ask Hugh when we get in to-night. Meantime we'll try to push along this cripple and let McIntyre decide what's to be done with him."

It was late in the afternoon when the herd was turned out to feed near the camp; and at night, soon after McIntyre got in, Jack told him the story of the crippled steer, and asked what should be done with it.

"Whose is it?" asked McIntyre.

"One of the Sturgis steers."

"Well," said McIntyre, "you and old man John-

son can decide what's to be done with it; and whatever you say goes."

Hugh, when consulted, thought that the best thing was to leave it behind them on the prairie, and that it must take its chances of living or dying. With rest and feed it would probably recover, but if driven along with the herd it would be sure to get worse and finally would have to be killed.

"All right," McIntyre consented; "when we move from here we'll leave it, and let it take its chance. We'll stop over here to-morrow, and cut and brand."

That night as they sat around the fire, Jack asked Mason to tell Hugh what he thought took place when an animal is hamstrung, and then asked Hugh what his beliefs were about the matter.

"Why," replied Hugh, as he stuffed down the fire in his pipe with a callous forefinger, "of course, Mason is dead right. I supposed everybody knew that. Hamstringing buffalo and stock means, I suppose, crippling them by hurting that big tendon above the hock. I've heard that in old days sometimes the Mexicans, and maybe the Indians too, used to ride up behind a buffalo with a right sharp saber or machete and by making a strong downward stroke did actually cut the hamstring and hurt the buffalo so that it had only three legs to go on; but I never supposed that anybody thought a wolf could really cut a hamstring through in that way. It's just the way Jack Mason says, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, and you'll find that most mountain men and most Indians who have seen anything will tell you just the same thing.

"I expect you read a whole lot in books that's written by men who never saw the things happen that

they describe: they've read of them perhaps a good many times, and sort of take it for granted that what they've read is all right; but, really, they don't know what it means. I guess this hamstringing business is one of those things. As Mason says, it might happen now and then that a wolf's jaws that hit that tendon just right would partly cut it in two, and then the animal might break it in struggling, but that wouldn't happen often."

"There's another thing, Hugh," Jack said, "that I want Mason to tell you—about some things he's heard from old John Monroe—some stories about how the Piegans came from their old home in the North down to where they live now. I want to get him to tell us about that."

"Why, yes," replied Hugh, "those are right good stories. I've often heard old John Monroe and other old men talk about that. I supposed maybe I'd told you about it, but I don't know as I have."

"No; I don't think you ever told me the whole story, though I've heard you and other people up there talk about it as something that was perfectly well known."

"Oh, yes," answered Hugh; "it's well known all right. All the old men know about it, but lots of the young men don't know anything at all about it. They don't care much about those old stories. All they want to do is to be riding horses; or maybe some of them, if they should have a dollar or so, go off down to the Birch Creek and buy some whisky with it."

"Well, I suppose it's too late to hear the story to-night; but to-morrow night, if you feel like it, I'd like to have you tell us those stories, Mason. You

would like to hear them over again, wouldn't you, Hugh?"

"Sure," said Hugh; "I'd like to mighty well."

"Me, too," said Tulare Joe, as he threw the stump of his cigarette into the fire and rose to go to his blankets.

CHAPTER XI

TANNING A BUCKSKIN

WHEN Joe learned that the camp was not to move the next day he told Jack that here was his opportunity to tan his deer hide, and that after the work of cutting and branding was over he would speak to McIntyre about doing this job of tanning. There were men enough to do herd duty, and the boys thought that in the few hours of daylight that remained after the day's work was done they could get the skin in fair shape.

"Of course," said Joe, "we can't make a good job of it; an Indian has all the time there is, and he does his tanning slowly and does it well. We'll have to be satisfied with a rough job, but anyhow we can get the hide fairly soft, and it can be worked on again later."

As soon as the outfit had got into camp in the afternoon, Joe went to the cook tent and borrowed Frank's spade, and going down near to the stream and choosing a place where the grass grew fairly thick, he began to dig a hole considerably larger than a water bucket. When he had made the hole a foot and a half deep, he got into it and tramped down the soil on the bottom, scraping up anything that was loose and finally leaving a fairly smooth and hard surface. While working at this, he asked Jack to

go to the wagon and bring the skin, and also the skull of the deer, which was tied to one of the bows of the wagon near the hide. Jack presently returned with both.

“I didn’t know you had saved the skull, Joe,” he said; “it looks as if it had been partly cooked. Did you save it for the brains?”

“Just for that,” was the reply. “You know, of course, that the brains is a pretty important part of the operation of tanning. I did think I might get the brains of a beef from some animal that we’d kill, but of course we never could be sure of having a chance to do our tanning just after the beef had been killed, so I thought I’d save this skull; and to keep it from spoiling I stuck it in the ashes that night we skinned the deer, and hauled some coals over it, and asked Frank not to throw it away if he found it. It sort of cooked and dried during the night, and doesn’t seem to have spoiled a bit.”

By this time the hole seemed to suit Joe. He took the deer’s hide and cut the string which bound it to the willow hoop, then began to fold it — taking care not to break the skin — until he made it into a more or less square package, flesh side out, somewhat less in size than the bottom of the hole. He placed it in the bottom of the hole, and put on it a rather heavy stone to hold it in position. Then, taking a bucket, he went down to the stream and brought two or three bucketfuls of water which he poured into the hole until it was almost full.

“This hole is close to the camp, and nothing is likely to disturb the skin during the night,” he said; “but the coyotes might find it, and I don’t mean to

take any chances, so I'm going to cover it up. Maybe Frank will lend us the tail gate of his wagon to put over it. I'll ask him, anyhow."

The cook, on being appealed to, declined to lend the tail gate of the cook wagon.

"Why don't you get the tail gate of the bed wagon and use that?" he suggested.

Joe at once did so. He carried the end gate out and placed it over the hole, and the boys put two or three heavy stones on it.

"Now," said Joe, "I need a sort of beam to use in scraping the hair off this hide, and I reckon one of these young cottonwoods will do. I wish we had a tree right here to rest it against."

"What's the matter with that box elder over there with the low fork? If you make your pole long enough you can rest it in that fork."

"Right you are," said Joe. "I'll go down and get one of those young trees and you'd better come along, because that green wood is pretty heavy, and if we cut a long pole it'll take us both to pack it over."

The grove was only fifty yards away, and Joe soon felled a young tree, which was six or eight inches through at the butt. Cutting fifteen feet off the larger end, he and Jack carried it over and soon wedged it in the fork of the box elder, only a short distance from the hole where the hide was soaking.

"Now," Joe explained, "I've got to peel this stick, because any little lumps on the bark are likely to make us cut the hide."

They set to work and in a few minutes the lower five or six feet of the pole was free from its bark and shone white in the sun. They looked over the wood,

and shaved down one or two little lumps until the surface of the peeled wood was quite smooth.

“There,” exclaimed Joe; “that’s all we can do to-night. My scraper is in my bed. I tied that up to the bows of the wagon until it got dry; and to-morrow, after our work is done, it won’t take long to scrape the hair from the hide and to put on the brains. I’d like to have a day more to work on the thing, but we’ve got to do the best we can in the time we have.”

The next day, after the work was over and the horses turned out, Joe repaired to the hole where the hide was soaking, and Jack went with him. Again they had recourse to the cook, who, after some grumbling, gave them half a dozen nails.

When the tail gate of the wagon was removed, the boys discovered that much of the water in the hole had soaked away into the soil, and the top of the stone on the deer hide was above the water. The hide, however, was still covered. After the stone had been removed and the hide taken out, they found it perfectly soft and pliable.

Joe carried it down to the stream and thoroughly rinsed it there, thus removing all the earth which clung to it. When he took it from the water he squeezed from it all the moisture that he could, then carried it up and hung it over the leaning pole, hair side out, and head toward the upper end. Now, with a stone, he drove a couple of nails into the pole and to them he fastened the head of the hide. Then he produced his scraper. Jack at once recognized it as a part of the deer’s fore-leg — the double bone that runs down from the elbow to meet the deer’s wrist — what is usually called the

knee. Of course Jack knew that in the hooped animals the bone of the upper arm, which is called the humerus, is altogether hidden within the body and that the joint of the foreleg close to the body corresponds with man's elbow. Joe's scraper was the bone running from this elbow down to the deer's knee, and Jack was interested and somewhat astonished — for he had never before thought about the matter — to see what a splendid natural scraper this bone made. He said as much to Joe.

“Didn't you ever notice,” asked Joe, “how often an Indian uses some natural and common thing for a tool in his work? I've seen that often, and it always made me wonder. Now you see this tool, in its curved shape and with that thin edge there of one of the bones, makes a great scraper. It's almost like a drawing-knife; and then look at the two handles on the ends — ain't that fine? The Indian that showed me how to tan, scraped the edge of his bone and made it a little sharper than this one is; but I reckon this will do all right; anyhow, we'll try. Of course, if we hadn't saved this bone from the deer's leg, we could have used a beef rib, or even the back of a knife; but this is the best and handiest thing I know of.”

“That seems to me about a perfect tool for this work,” declared Jack; “and I wonder at it too.”

Joe took the leg bone of the deer and standing before the skin which hung over the pole, flesh side to the wood, began with long even strokes to scrape the hair from it. To Jack's surprise this came away readily and evenly, leaving the naked hide smooth and white. From time to time Joe shifted the skin, and gradually removed the hair from the whole hide down to the very edges, though on the head and ears the

work was more raggedly done than on the neck, back and sides. Before very long, though, the skin was absolutely hairless, and as white on the hair side as it was white on the flesh side when Joe turned it over. It was quite free from superfluous tissue, for the boys had cleaned it well before stretching it.

After the hair had all been removed, Joe took the hide down to the stream and gave it a thorough washing, kneading it together as if to get out of it all the animal matter that had been left on it, and finally, weighing it down with stones, left it there to soak. Meanwhile he sent Jack back to the cook tent to bring a wash basin with a little warm water; and when Jack returned, he found that Joe had split the deer's skull. In a moment the brains of the animal were turned into the warm water, where they were crushed and pulverized by the boys' fingers until the water was all whitish and looked like soapsuds with a few white particles floating in it.

"Really, these brains ought to be heated for a while over the fire," explained Joe; "but we haven't much time to fuss, and maybe the hot water will answer just as well. What we want to do is to get these brains as fine as we can, and then we must build a little fire and warm the mixture again, and then put it on the skin."

They got together a few small sticks and chips and built a little fire; and then set the basin on it, having a bucket partly full of water close by.

Then Joe went down to the stream where he had left the hide soaking, and after shaking it about in the water to free it from any sediment that might have caught on it, he lifted it up and brought it to the

grass near the fire, and then folded it over to make a long narrow piece. He took hold of one end, and Jack of the other, and they twisted it and wrung out almost all the water. It was surprising to Jack now how little the hide looked like the deer skin of an hour before. Two or three times the hide was unfolded and stretched out and then doubled again and the boys put all the power of their arms into the wringing process.

"The best way," said Joe, "would be to knot the skin around the limb of a tree and twist it just as hard as a man can twist; but we can't do that now."

When all the water possible had been wrung from the skin, it was unfolded, and Joe told Jack to help him stretch it and get it again to something like its natural shape. They worked for some time at this, pulling against each other, across and sidewise of the skin, and one hand pulling against the other at the edges; then, when the skin had again taken somewhat the shape of the dried hide of the day before, it was spread on the grass as flat as possible.

Now Joe added water to the brains in the basin which were just steaming, until he had increased the quantity of the mixture about three times; and carrying the basin over to where the hide lay, he began to take the fluid in his hand and to spread it smoothly over the hair side of the skin, rubbing it in as he did so.

When Jack saw what was being done, he took hold also, and soon the whole skin was covered with the mixture, which was rubbed in and kneaded with the knuckles, especially near the edges of the hide and about the head and neck.

“They say,” explained Joe, “that the main part of the tanning is the way you put the brains on, and the way you work the thing dry afterward.”

By this time the sun was getting low.

“I don’t know whether we’ll be able to finish this chore to-night or not,” Joe said. “After the brains have been put on, it ought to be left in the sun to be het up and then it ought to be dried; but I’m afraid we can’t do that. We’ll have to quit now before very long.”

After the brains had been thoroughly applied, Joe began to fold and roll up the skin until it was in a tight ball; and then he sat down and made a cigarette.

“That’s about as far,” he said, “as we’ll be able to go to-night. Before we go to bed I’ll spread the skin out, and to-morrow we’ll have to let it dry in the wagon. I’m afraid it won’t be much of a job of tanning: it’s had to be done too fast and spread out over too much time. If we were going to lie over here to-morrow, I’d give it a good soaking in water and then start in to work it soft and dry; but that’s something that’ll have to wait.”

This was what had to be done; and the next morning when Jack looked into the cook wagon where the hide was again tied to the bows, he saw that it had greatly shrunk, and though it had the color of buckskin, it looked almost like a piece of rawhide.

A few days later, Jack and Joe, having two or three hours which they could devote to finishing their tanning, again set to work at the hide. As soon as they came into camp, Joe looked up a place in the shade where the water was deep, and put the hide there to soak. Then, when they were able to get at it, they

gave it a thorough washing and rinsed it many times in the water, and then took it over to a nearby tree which had low branches on it. Here one end of the hide was doubled about a branch and the other fastened to a short stout stick, and first Joe, later relieved by Jack, twisted the hide rope against the branch until the water was again all out of it. Once more it was taken down as before and pulled and stretched on its edges until it was brought back nearly to its natural shape. Then Joe, taking off his shoes and stockings, sat down on the ground and began to pull the hide this way and that, often throwing the hide over his feet and slowly dragging it over the feet toward the body. He rubbed the hide between his hands, shifting the hands constantly, and with a motion as if he wished to break up the fiber of the skin. Jack watched him and when he saw the purpose of this manipulation sat down beside him and helped.

“The northern Indians, Joe,” he said, “have what seems to me a better plan than that—they have a rope running from the top of a pole down to a pin in the ground and pull the hide back and forth over that. Or I’ve seen them tie up a buffalo shoulder-blade with a big hole cut in it to a pole, and, passing the deer skin right through the hole in the bone, they pull it backward and forward through that. It’s a labor-saving scheme; I guess very likely it doesn’t make quite as good buckskin as your way, but it saves a whole lot of elbow-grease.”

“I should think it would,” answered Joe; “and what’s the matter with trying that rope scheme right now? I’ll go to my saddle and get my rope and we can drive a pin in the ground here; and between you

and me I believe we can soften that thing in pretty short order."

While Joe had gone for the rope, Jack whittled a long sharp pin notched at the larger end; and after Joe had fastened the rope to a branch above, they drew it tight down to the pin and fixed it there securely, and in a few moments were hard at work softening the hide by pulling it backward and forward against the rope. It was extraordinary how soft and limp the hide became and how soon it began to look like real buckskin. When the hide was quite dry and they took it off and felt it, Jack congratulated Joe on having done a mighty good job of tanning.

That night in camp he showed the buckskin to Hugh, who praised it highly, and said that when smoked it would make part of a good shirt.

"You've got to smoke it, though," said Hugh, "or else every time it gets wet it will stiffen up and be just like a board, and will have to be rubbed soft again."

"Oh, I know, of course, it's no good until it has been smoked," replied Joe; "but in this camp we've got to do our tanning when we can, and there won't be any chance to smoke it until the next time we lie over somewhere."

"Well," suggested Hugh, "why don't you wait until you get your other buckskin? Then you can sew them together to make a kind of bag, and build a small smoke and fix your bag up over the fire so that the smoke will go into the mouth of the bag."

"That would be a good idea," said Joe. "I guess we'll wait for our other buckskin first."

CHAPTER XII

INDIAN STORIES

THE next day was one of hard work — cutting cattle and branding calves; but as the number of cows in this bunch was small, the work of separating the brands and branding the calves was not so great as might have been expected from the number of cattle to be worked. There was an unusual number of strays, as the boys had noticed for several days past, and these were all turned into the big bunch which McIntyre proposed to send over to the home range on the Pick Ranch.

So it happened that night that the boys were less tired than after an ordinary day's work. Supper came early and they lounged about the fire talking and smoking, for the evening was cool and the warmth of the fire pleasant. A sharp shower of rain had fallen in the middle of the night before, more or less rousing the sleepers, who had hurried about looking up their slickers which they spread over their blankets. The early morning was clear and bright, but cool, and the higher hills in the distance showed that there the rain had been snow, for they were white for a long distance below their summits. The cool weather contributed something to the ease of the day's work, and during the morning there was less dust than usual, although by midday all the moisture had dried, and the powdery clouds of dust were as suffocating as they usually are when cattle are being handled.

Jack had not forgotten Mason's promise to tell him John Monroe's story of the movements of the Black-foot tribes in early days; and not long after supper he spoke to him about this. Mason was slow to respond, declaring that Hugh Johnson probably knew the story better than he, and could tell it if he would. But after some persuasion Mason began.

"Well, according to old John Monroe, the way I remember what he told me, it was like this:

"The old men say that a long time ago, in the time of our grandfathers, or great-grandfathers, or even back before that, the Blackfoot people used to live out in the timber country away east of the Rocky Mountains. In that land they were at war with people, who fought with them and troubled them. Game was hard to get, for their only weapons were arrows pointed with bits of stone and with these weapons it was hard for them to kill food. They had never been a people that ate fish, but believed that all animals and all birds were fit for food and could be eaten.

"John said that the attacks of their enemies and the difficulty of getting food were the things that made them move from that lower country up closer to the mountains. He says that when he was a little boy, and afterward when he was larger, he used to hear in the lodge the talks between his mother and an old Blood Indian named Su' tã nē. This old man may have been some sort of relation to John, but about that I don't know. At all events, Su' tã nē was then very old, and the time he used to talk about was when he was a little boy. Su' tã nē had heard his father speak of the trouble that they used to have down in the timber country, and said that it was in his father's

boyhood that they began to move westward, traveling up the Saskatchewan or some of the rivers that flow into it. Su' tã nē said that it was when he was a little boy that they first saw the Rocky Mountains; this, according to John, must have been a long time ago. John must be now sixty or sixty-five years old, and he said that Su' tã nē was very old when he used to hear him talk about this. If we say that John heard it fifty years ago and that Su' tã-nē was born when his father was thirty, it carries the beginning of the movement back a hundred and thirty or a hundred and forty years, which, according to my guess, would be about 1745 or 50, and I reckon that was a long time before any white man got into the country where those people used to live. Maybe, though, it was a good deal longer ago than that. I guess all John meant was that it was long, long ago, and when Su' tã nē said that it was in his father's time that they began to move toward the mountains, he may have meant only that this move was before he knew anything."

"I guess you're right there, Jack," said Hugh. "Indians are mighty weak on dates, after they get back farther than they themselves can remember."

"Yes," went on Mason, "I don't believe it's any use to try to fix a date. It's bound to be guesswork. Anyhow, old John said that Su' tã nē, when he described the country that they lived in, said it was mostly timbered, with stretches of prairie among the timber — something like big parks, I reckon.

"It was in Su' tã nē's time, in his young days, as I understood, that the Blackfeet, who had been slowly drifting westward, at last reached the mountains. When they got to the rough country they found there

lots of game of all kinds, and found it very much easier to get close to than it ever had been before. So they thought that the change they had made was a mighty good one; and that's the way they changed from a timber living people to a mountain people. It was a good while after this that they got horses and began to travel around out on the prairie. The old men used to tell John that the time they first ventured out on the prairie was when they began to travel along the old trail which still runs north and south along the mountains. Of course, you know the old Red River cart trail, Hugh, and very likely you too, Jack."

"Yes," replied Hugh, "I know it; but I don't believe son here has ever been on it."

"Old John Monroe believes thoroughly in this story, and he naturally would, because it comes from his mother, and his relations, but he says that all the old Indians in that northern country believe in it just the same as he does. He believes that the Crees and the Blackfeet are relations, though he doesn't pretend that they are very close relations.

"Well, according to old John, a while after the Indians got up close to the mountains there, up North, the white man came into the country; and when the white men came, the Indians began to get guns. Before that they had begun to get horses, maybe through the Kutenais on the other side of the mountains; and when they got guns and horses they began to take courage and to venture out on the prairie. They began to find out that they could fight their enemies and take care of themselves. Besides this, they had learned that while there were no horses north of them, the tribes to the south had horses; and of course that led

to their going more and more to war, because everybody wanted horses. They were about the most valuable things that a man could get hold of. These journeys to war and their fightings led to the Indians moving south along the foot of the mountains, and out on the prairie.

"Now of course I'm just telling you what John Monroe told me. I don't know anything about it myself."

"Well," said Hugh, "I guess that's gospel; and it always seemed to me that the names that the Blackfeet have for the different points of the compass were very good evidence that the Blackfeet did come from the north. The Blackfeet word for north means back, or behind, direction; while the word for south means ahead, or before, direction. It seems to me mighty natural that if people were traveling they should call the direction that they had come from, behind direction, and the one that they were going to, ahead direction. Of course the two words for east and west they called down direction and up direction. That doesn't mean anything more than that the streams that they crossed were flowing down hill toward the lower land; while they were flowing from the higher land which lay to the west."

"I never heard that before," said Mason. "That's mighty funny; and it certainly seems to back up John Monroe's story about their having come from the north."

"Did John tell you," asked Hugh, "about the story of the people getting separated?"

"Yes," Mason answered. "He told me that all the Piegans believe that somewhere off in the southern

country, there's a tribe of Piegans — at least a tribe of people who speak the same language that the Piegans talk — and they believe that those people are a part of the Piegan tribe. I don't just remember how they got separated, but I do recall that it was when they were crossing a big water that the separation took place. Do you remember it, Hugh?"

"Yes," said Hugh. "This was the story, as I heard it. A long time ago a big camp of people, the whole Piegan tribe, were traveling south and they came to a big river and started to cross it on the ice. Of course, in those days the tribe was a big one, and when they marched they were strung out over a long distance. Some of the people had already crossed the river; some were yet on the ice; but most of them had not yet come to the stream. As they were going along, a child saw frozen in the ice a buffalo horn that was shiny and pretty and cried for it. Some old woman began to knock it loose, and while she was doing that, suddenly the ice in the river broke up. Pretty much all the Indians on the ice were drowned; and now there was a big wide swollen stream full of running ice separating the two portions of the tribe. Of course the people could not sit down on the bank and wait for the stream to go down, and starve to death. Each party had to start out and look for food, and the two parties never met again. So it is that the north Indians still believe that somewhere off to the south there are a lot of Blackfeet living as a tribe. Men say that in their travels, either on the war-path or visiting other tribes, they have met people who speak a language so much like their own that they could understand them. Nobody really knows anything about it."

"Well," said Jack, "that's a great story. Wouldn't it be fun to go around among the Indian tribes and try to hunt up those Blackfeet and tell them about their relations up North?"

"Yes," added Mason, "that's a good story. I remember now that that's just about what John Monroe told me; but I couldn't have told it the way Hugh did."

"It's a good story," said Hugh, "but it's a story that a good many tribes of Indians tell. I've heard the Cheyennes tell the same story; and the Sarcees, and the Crows. Now I wonder if it isn't just some old legend founded on something that maybe really did happen once, but that has been adopted by half a dozen tribes that don't seem to be any kin to each other, as far as we know?"

"One time, when I was younger and heard this same story told by two tribes, I thought maybe I'd found the people that used to belong to the Blackfeet; but I reckon that's not so. You know, if you've traveled around, that you'll find lots of different tribes that have the same story and each tribe thinks the story belongs to it. Nobody knows where that story originally came from, nor to whom it actually belongs."

"Say, Hugh," Mason asked, "did you ever hear that story told by John Monroe, about the first time the north Indians saw the white people?"

"Yes," replied Hugh, "I've heard that story; but a good while ago, and I don't feel sure that I could tell it. Do you remember it well enough to give it to us?"

"Well, I don't know that I do; but, if you'd like, I'll try it."

“Pitch in,” said Hugh; and McIntyre added, “Go it, Mason.”

“This happened a long time ago, old John Monroe said, but how long, of course, I can’t tell, any more than he could; but, according to the story, this was the first time the Blackfeet ever saw any white people. John said that old Su’ tã nē told him the story and Su’ tã nē said that his grandfather was one of the Blackfeet people. It happened when the Blackfeet were living up North, as I’ve just told you about. Here’s the story:

“A party of Indians were traveling south, and while they were going through a big patch of timber on the north of some big river, they saw something that they could not understand. It looked like beaver work where beavers had been cutting down trees, but when they looked at the stumps and the cuttings they could see that no beaver that they knew anything about could possibly have opened its mouth wide enough to cut such chips. They talked and wondered about this and finally concluded that the tree must have been cut down by some mysterious animal. You know the Blackfeet are great fellows for believing that there are strange animals and people living under the water, and they thought that this work must have been done by underwater animals.

“Presently they came to a place where one of the trees that had been cut down, after having its branches lopped off, had been dragged along the ground. They followed the trail, anxious to find out what was happening, and as they followed it they saw that all through the timber there were many other trails like this, and that presently they all came together in one big trail,

and in this trail they found tracks that looked like the tracks of people, but they were not shaped like the track of a human foot, and besides that, at the back of this track there was a deep mark.

“ Well, they followed the trail which was now getting to be a big one, and presently they came to where they could see that the timber ended and there was an open spot beyond, and as they looked out through the timber they saw some animals walking around on their hind legs. For a minute they thought that they were bears playing with sticks, but then they saw that these looked like people, and that they were lifting up logs and putting them in a great pile. As they looked, they saw that some of these animals had a great deal of hair or wool on their faces; they seemed to be naked, for they wore no robes. Some had red bodies and some black ones. So they saw that they could not be people. As they talked about it, they concluded that these were certainly some under-water animals, but they wondered what they could be doing with these sticks.

“ They were frightened by what they saw, and fearing that these animals might discover them and hurt them, they finally started away and went back to their own country without being seen. When they reached home they told their story and the people who heard it could not understand it, for they were told of something that was wholly outside of their own experiences. Here were people who were naked, who had red bodies, or again were dark colored everywhere, except for a red stripe around the body and a red tail.

“ The story was so strange that pretty much all the men in the camp wanted to know more about it — to see

this wonderful sight for themselves; and so quite a party started back to the place. When they reached the open part of the timber, these mysterious animals were still at work there. The head man of the Black-foot must have been a pretty plucky fellow, for he ordered all his party to stay where they were, and said that he would go out and meet these animals and try to find out something about them. But he told his men that if these strange creatures attacked him, they must come out and help him.

“That Indian sure had plenty of sand. He walked down toward these people; and when they saw him, one of them walked up to him and stuck out his hand and took the Indian’s hand and moved it up and down. The Indian looked at the white man and at the white man’s hand, but he had no idea what this meant, and did nothing. Presently other white men came up to him, and the Indian discovered that they were people like himself, except that they had different voices and different colored skin and hair.

“After a while, when the Indians in the timber saw no harm had come to their chief, they came out a few at a time and went down toward the white people. The white people talked to them and made signs to them, but the Indians could not understand what they meant. At last, however, the whites managed to make some of the Indians understand that they wanted them to go into the house with them, and a number of them went in; and as some time went by without anything terrible happening, all the Indians began to take courage.

“In this house there were a great many wonderful things. The white people carried knives in their belts

and showed the Indians how these would cut. The Indians were nearly tickled to death with the knives. Then a great big white man showed them an ax, and while they stood by he cut a big log in two in a very short time; and when the Indians saw the chips fly they began to understand the strange beaver work that they had seen.

“One of the white men took down from the wall something that the Indians thought was a long, straight stick but when the man showed it to them they could see that while part of it was made of wood a part was made of a hard black stone. The white man kept making signs about this stick, but they didn't know what he meant. Pretty soon the man took a white cow's horn, and out of it poured some black sand into his hand and poured this into a hole at the end of the stick. Then he made a little ball of grass and pushed this into the hole with another stick; then out of a bag he took something that was round and heavy and put that into the hole, and pushed down some more grass; then he poured some of the black sand into the side of the stick. The Indians watched him do all these things, and of course had no idea as to what it all meant. After he had finished doing these things, the white man made signs to the Indians and made a great noise with his mouth, and pointed to the stick. He put the stick to his shoulder, holding it out in front of him, and made motions of many kinds. Presently he gave the stick to one of the Indians, and put his finger on a little piece of stone sticking out from beneath it. When the Indian touched this under part, the stick made a terrible noise and a big smoke, and flew out of the Indian's hands, and he nearly fell down.

“ All the Indians were very much scared, and some of them fell down, but all the white men laughed and nodded, and made signs, but of course the Indians did not understand them.

“ Now the white man picked up the stick from the ground where it had fallen and again took the horn of black sand and did the same things to the stick as before, but this time the Indians all stood away from him. They didn't know what was going to happen. After the white man had finished doing these things, he persuaded them to come out of doors with him. Then he sat down on the ground and put the stick to his shoulder, pointing it toward a log that was lying on the ground. Again the terrible noise was heard, but the white man didn't let go the stick. He held it in his hand. Then he got up and walked over to the log and showed the bullet hole, and pushed a little stick into it. Then he loaded the gun again.

“ By this time the Indians were beginning to understand the power of this stick; and at last, after the white man had loaded the gun again and encouraged the Indians, he took one of them close to the log and showed him how to point the gun and how to pull the trigger. The Indian fired and hit the log. I reckon when he found that he had hit it he thought that he was one of the biggest men in the country.

“ Well, after a while the Indians and the white men got to be pretty friendly. The Indians could see that knives and axes and copper cups, to say nothing of guns, were a heap better than anything they had; and the white men on the other hand wanted the furs and dresses that the Indians wore. They traded for them, and after a while the Indians and the white people got

to know each other pretty well, and commenced to trade regularly.

“And that’s the story as I heard it.”

“You told that mighty well, Mason,” commented Hugh; “a great deal better than anybody else could tell it, except perhaps old John Monroe, or some of those old Pieigans.”

“But I want a lot of explanation,” said Joe. “What about those fellows with the red tails? I don’t savvy that a bit. I can understand about the red bodies, because I suppose that means they wore red shirts, but what about the red tails?”

“Well, Joe,” replied Hugh, “you’ve never been out in that northern country or else you wouldn’t ask a question like that. The old voyageurs and people in the North always used to wear a red sash tied around their waist with the long ends hanging down in front. When they were working, to get these ends out of the way, they used to pass them around their body, and then under the sash, so that they hung down behind.”

“Well,” laughed Joe, “that certainly is the limit.”

“And,” Jack said, “just think of their taking a tree chopped down with an ax for one cut down by a beaver; and their not knowing the foot-prints of a person wearing a shoe!”

“Sho,” drawled Hugh; “haven’t I told you time and again that we all of us measure up things by what we ourselves have seen, and we find it hard to believe anything that’s outside the range of our own experience. If there was any way of proving it, I’d be willing to bet a good horse and saddle and bridle that if we’d been there we’d all have acted just the way those Indians did.”

CHAPTER XIII

BIG WOLVES

It happened the next day that Jack was riding circle on the far side of the ground that was being covered. Almost all day he rode without seeing any cattle, and it was well along in the afternoon when he came up to the top of a ridge and stopped his horse just before he reached its crest. Here he dismounted and, walking up, peeped over to see what there might be on the other side. This of course was not at all what most cowboys would have done, but the habits of caution taught Jack by Hugh in the early days of his travels in the West were too firmly fixed to be overcome, and when alone Jack always looked over a hill in this way.

Rather to his surprise he saw down in a little flat, five hundred yards away, a small bunch of cattle — perhaps eighteen or twenty head. This was a surprise, partly because he had seen none during the day, but chiefly because the cattle were close bunched, as if brought together by a herder. For an instant he did not comprehend what this meant, but then his eye caught two gray animals — big wolves — which were slowly walking about the herd. Evidently the cattle had come together for protection, and were standing there, heads out, ready to repel an attack if it should be made on them. Jack felt that he ought to ride down and drive off the wolves and bring the cattle in, but, on the other hand, he was very curious to see

what the wolves would do. More than once he had seen coyotes trying to take from a cow a young calf that was by her side, but this was the first time he had seen big wolves round up cattle. He waited, therefore, to see what would happen, thinking that after a little while the wolves would probably give up the job and go off in search of some single animal which they could run down and kill, as he had once seen them do on his way out from the railroad to his uncle's ranch.

For two or three minutes nothing happened, and the wolves continued to walk around the bunch. Then, suddenly, one of them made a dash at the bunch of cattle, going so close to them that Jack expected to see the wolf caught on a steer's horns and thrown into the air. When the wolf rushed up, the bunch of cattle seemed to tremble; that is to say, there was apparently a slight movement by every individual in the herd, and Jack recalled similar movements which he had seen years before in British Columbia among a school of salmon far below the surface of the water, when some one darted down toward the fish a spear which nearly reached them. It seemed to him that every animal yielded a little, yet no one of them perhaps moved more than six or eight inches.

A moment or two later one of the wolves made another rush, which was followed by a similar slight movement of the bunch; and then the wolves continued their slow march about the cattle. This happened several times, but at last when the wolf dashed toward the bunch, one animal — a full-grown one — burst out of the herd and started to run. In an instant the wolf was behind it, between it and the other cattle; and a moment later the second wolf had joined the first one,

and they loped quietly along after the single animal. Presently, running side by side, they drew up close to its heels, and then, separating, one of them made a vicious snap at the cow's leg while the other sprang and caught it in the flank; and in an instant, too quickly for Jack to see how it was done, the beast was on its side and the wolves were tearing at its belly. Jack jumped to his horse and rode over the ridge, charging down toward the wolves. They paid no attention to him until he was within less than a hundred yards, and then, suddenly looking up, they galloped away. He fired four or five shots after them, but without result.

The animal that they had pulled down was a two-year-old heifer, big, strong and fat. Her whole flank was torn out, and she was dead. There was nothing to be done with her. The brand was not one with which Jack was familiar, and he thought she was a stray from some distant ranch. He drove the remaining cattle slowly toward camp, and after a time met some of the other boys bringing in another bunch, and turned his in with theirs.

That night, after supper, he talked with Hugh about the wolves and the harm they did, and also about the tremendous power that seemed to be wrapped up in one of those not very large hides. Hugh had seen wolves pull down cattle, and had a great respect for the way in which these animals were able to supply themselves with food.

"You know more about big wolves, son, than most men do," said Hugh. "You've picked up what we can all see on the prairie here; and, besides that, you've had a tame wolf of your own. I reckon that you found, after you got to know him well, that your

wolf was just nothing but a big dog — bigger and stronger, and ten times more enduring, of course, than any dog you ever saw, but still just pretty nearly plain dog. Of course he and his father and grandfathers for a good many generations had always been wild dogs, but up to within a few generations wolves were no more afraid of people — in this country, I mean — than they were of any other animals. You see in old times Indians never chased wolves, or frightened them at all. They did kill some, but they didn't kill 'em in a way to scare 'em. I reckon I've told you already — if not I, the Blackfeet have told you — about how the Indians used to catch wolves in old times. If the Blackfeet haven't described it to you, you surely must have had some stories told you that explained how they caught 'em."

"Why, yes, Hugh," Jack replied, "I remember one such story; but I never thought to ask much about how they caught wolves — they spoke about setting snares around the *pis'kun* and catching the wolves in this way, but I didn't ask much about it."

"That's just what they used to do. You see, there were always holes left in the *pis'kun* walls, mostly small holes, and through these holes the wolves and coyotes used to go into the *pis'kun* to feed on the carcasses or the offal that was left there after the butchering. Well, the people liked wolf skins: they used them for robes, or for hats, or to cut up into wide strips to sew on the edges of a buffalo robe to make it look nice; and so around these holes they used to set loops of sinew with a running knot. When the wolf was squeezing through a hole he would put his head through one of these nooses and, draw-

ing it up, would choke to death in no time at all. Catching wolves in this way didn't scare 'em and they were always very tame."

"But, Hugh, I should think that after a while all the wolves in a certain section of the country would have been killed off."

"Not a bit of it," declared Hugh. "Wolves were great travelers and used to follow the buffalo around, especially in winter. When buffalo were plenty they really didn't have to do any hunting to amount to anything; they would just wait around the edge of the herd. Animals were constantly getting hurt—bulls were fighting; calves getting trampled on; buffalo of all sizes were getting drowned when crossing the stream, or being mired down in some soap hole. I tell you, the wolves lived fat in those days, especially along the Missouri River. Mr. Sturgis told me one time about reading in the book that Lewis and Clark wrote, telling the story of their trip up the Missouri River, that about one buffalo pound they came to, wolves were so plenty and so gentle that one of the men killed one with a kind of spear that they carried. The wolf let the man walk right up to him."

"Yes, I remember that story," said Jack. "I remember it because the book says that the man killed the wolf with an espointon. I didn't know what that was, and it took me quite a little time to find out. It seems it's a kind of halberd—a sort of cross between a spear and an ax. Anyhow, it had a long handle."

"Well, of course," commented Hugh, "when a man can get close enough to an animal to stick a spear into it, the animal isn't what you'd call shy."

"I should say not," answered Jack.

"Well," Hugh said, "I was talking about the wolf being a big dog. You know, I reckon, that wolves and dogs will cross."

"Yes; I've read that in books a good many times; and the books talk about Indian dogs being like wolves. I remember the first day I came out to Swift Water, the time that Uncle Will killed the bear, I saw a coyote, and when I saw him, I thought it was an Indian dog, and that there must be a camp of Indians somewhere near."

"I remember," chuckled Hugh; "I remember that day well. You certainly had a lot of excitement that day, considering how old you were, and where you came from."

"Didn't I! I tell you, those early days were mighty exciting."

"More so than anything that's likely to happen to you again out in this country," drawled Hugh.

"You were saying that the wolves were dogs; and I know that's just what Swiftfoot always seemed to be. He would get scared like a dog; when he was pleased he would wag his tail and lay back his ears and show his teeth like a dog; if I took him out in the country and turned him loose, he hunted like a dog; and finally, when he got lost and could not see me, he became confused and lost his wits like a dog."

"Well, I've seen a lot of half-breed wolves, and if these half-breeds get away, and become wild, they're worse than the wolves themselves; they're a good deal smarter, and it seems as if they were hungrier, and they certainly have plenty of courage. I never saw many of these half-breeds that had gone wild,

but I do remember one bunch down near the Dismal River, in Nebraska, that certainly made a lot of trouble. Old Lute North killed a number of 'em, and I got the story from him, and got it straight, and if you'd care to hear it, I'll tell it to you."

"Sure, Hugh, I'd give anything to hear it."

"Well," said Hugh, "this is what Captain North told me. It didn't happen so very long ago. It seems that one fall Major Frank North brought up to the ranch at the head of the Dismal River a big mongrel dog that some one in Columbus had given him. The dog was big and black, that's about all you could say about him. His hair was longish—not so long as that of a Newfoundland, but a good deal longer than that of a Great Dane. In fact, he looked as if he might be a cross between those two breeds.

"About the middle of that winter this dog went off from the ranch one night with a big gray wolf, and the next morning Lute followed their tracks in the snow for several miles, but could not find them. The dog was never seen again, and Lute always believed that the wolves killed him, for he saw places in the snow on the trail where the dog and a wolf had fought.

"Next spring, Al Pratt, one of the cow punchers at the Cody and North ranch, saw an old she-wolf traveling and seven puppies following her. Four of these puppies were black, and three were gray. Al chased the wolves and managed to get close enough to them to kill two of the black ones. All through the summer the others were seen now and then, but nobody could get near enough to get a shot at them.

That fall Bill Burke, another puncher, shot and killed one of the gray puppies, and that winter a trapper poisoned the other gray ones. The only ones of the family now left were the mother and two black puppies, but they were a fearful trouble on the range. They would kill stock of all kinds. They were just as ready to take a steer as a calf, and Lute told me that one time he found where they'd killed a cow, a two-year-old and a yearling in one day. They were very shy and always on the lookout, and they seemed never to go back to the animal that they had killed for a second meal, so it was impossible to poison them. Lute said, too, that there was a band of six or eight coyotes traveling around behind 'em, and that after the wolves had eaten all they wanted when they killed, then the coyotes had their chance.

“Lute told me that he hunted those wolves a good many days; and, of course, bein' out riding all the time, and all the time on the lookout, and bein' the kind of a shot he is, it seemed pretty sure that finally he would get 'em.

“When he did get his shot, it was just by accident. He was hunting a big blacktail deer, creeping along the ground and trying to get within shot, when he saw one of the black half-breeds standing on a sand-hill nearly a mile away. He watched him, and after a time the wolf lay down. Then Lute began to hunt him, and I expect he did some mighty careful hunting. Anyhow, he told me it took him a couple of hours to get to the foot of the hill they were on. The hill was steep, and you may guess something about what it is to climb one of those steep hills in that sand. I reckon Lute was about out of wind when

he stopped to get his breath. He stood looking toward the top of the hill, when the old mother wolf, who was lying in a sand blow-out, raised up and stood with her fore feet on the bank looking down at him.

“There wasn’t any time to think, and he jerked his rifle to his shoulder and fired, and she disappeared. He scrambled up the hill as fast as he could, and when he got to where he could look over, he could see the two black wolves going down the side of the hill. They were jumping up on their hind legs and looking back for their mother.

“As soon as Lute came in sight they began to run, and he shot at one of them just as they were passing out of sight. A moment later one of them came in sight again and Lute shot at him. That fellow kept running for perhaps a quarter of a mile, and then settled down into a walk, and Lute knew that he was hit. He sat and watched until the wolf disappeared in some low sand-hills, and then went back to the blow-out where he had seen the old wolf, and there she was. This hole was about three feet deep and it was all Lute could do to lift her out. He said she was the biggest wolf he’d ever seen. He now got his horse and went after the wounded one. Finally he found him, and after running him a couple of miles killed him. The other black one was never seen again after that, and it’s probable that Lute killed him with his second shot.

“Lute told me that he counted something like seventy head of cattle that he knew they had killed that one winter. When Lute killed the old mother and the black fellows, that bunch of coyotes was close

to them. He saw them run away from the hill. The black wolf looked just about like a wolf, with a sharp nose and sharp ears. He measured seven feet from the tip of his nose to the tip of his tail."

"That's one of the most interesting stories I've ever heard, Hugh; and people who don't know anything about animals, I expect, would hardly believe it."

"That's so," said Hugh. "When you're talking to people about something that they don't know anything about, they're likely to think that you're stringing 'em. You see most of us measure up everything we hear by what we've seen, or what we've heard and believe to be true; and when we hear anything outside of that little narrow range, we're mighty likely to think that people are lying to us."

"Of course, that's so," Jack assented. "I know sometimes back East I've told about common everyday things that happened here, and the people I was talking to thought at first that I was just inventing stories. Have you seen a great many of these half-breed wolves? I mean crossed between a dog and big wolves, not coyotes?"

"Yes," said Hugh; "in my time I've seen quite a number; but most of 'em had been brought up at home with their mothers. They were always timid and afraid of strangers, but they never did any particular harm around the house, except maybe to kill chickens, or something like that. Of course, a wolf—or a dog either, for the matter of that—always likes to hunt; and if anything runs, it's bound to chase it. You recollect, I reckon, some tame coyotes that Charley Powell had one while several years ago,

and don't you remember that he had to kill one of them because it got into the way of killing his chickens?"

"That's so," answered Jack; "I remember that now. But I never heard that those big wolves he and Bessie had ever did any harm."

"No," replied Hugh, "neither did I."

Tulare Joe, who had been sitting by listening to this talk, now asked a question.

"Mr. Johnson, have you ever seen any black wolves in this country?"

"Not in this country; but way farther south I saw one once; and down there they have red wolves, as you've probably seen yourself. I saw black wolf skins out on the Coast."

"Yes," said Joe, "down in Texas I've seen red wolves myself, but it didn't look to me as if they were as big as these gray wolves that we have up in this country. Anyhow, down in the southern country most of the animals like those we have up here seem much smaller: the deer are smaller, and it seems to me that the wolves and the antelope don't run so large. The jack-rabbits, though, are bigger; but then they're not just like our jack-rabbits up here — they're some different."

By this time the fire was burning low and the boys were leaving it to spread down their beds at different points on the prairie. The discussion of wolves was given up. Hugh smoked a last pipe, and presently they all went to bed.

CHAPTER XIV

A BAD MAN

As Jack and Joe and three or four of the older men lounged around the fire a night or two after that, most of the younger boys having gone to their blankets, McIntyre turned to Hugh.

“Who do you suppose I saw to-day on the range?” he asked.

Hugh looked up inquiringly.

“Claib Wood.”

“What’s he doing here?” asked Hugh. “I thought he’d been run out of the country and had gone to stay.”

“Oh, well,” said McIntyre, “that’s what most of us thought, I guess. He got a warning from the people around here and from the stock association that he’d do well to get out of the country; but I met him to-day, and he said ‘Howdy’ to me as chirk as you please. I didn’t have any talk with him, and I watched him kind o’ close, for I didn’t know what he might be up to. He never turned his head, though, after he passed; just rode on across country, and I saw him going for a mile or two before he got behind a hill.”

“Well,” drawled Hugh, “I reckon that this time he’s not after calves. Maybe he’s come down here to go in to the railroad and see if he can’t get some

money out of that wife of his. Since he quit home about a year ago, she's been doing well, and has got quite a nice little eating-house there in town. Maybe he's heard about that and has come back to make her give up to him."

"If that's what he's after," said McIntyre, "it's an infernal shame. I never had any use for these bad men that we used to have in the country, but I do wish now that somebody a little worse than Claib would come along and kill him off."

When Hugh and McIntyre had begun talking, Jack Mason was lying on the ground close to the fire, seemingly asleep, but presently he opened his eyes and then rose to his elbow and listened intently. After a time he asked McIntyre if this was the Claib Wood who four or five years ago used to be around Rawlins.

"Yes," said McIntyre; "he's the man — little, sawed-off fellow with light brown hair and a brown mustache; good cow hand and mighty quick with a gun."

"I reckon that's the man," returned Mason.

He said nothing more for a little while. Jack was about to ask some question about the man, when Mason spoke again.

"I used to know Claib, but I haven't seen him for a good many years. Which way did you say he was going, Mac?"

"Well," answered McIntyre, "when I saw him he was just riding across the prairie, but from the way he was headed I judged that he was going in to the railroad."

"What time was it you passed him?"

"About two or three o'clock this afternoon. If he

was going to town and rode fast, he'll be there by this time."

"Yes," Mason said, "so he will."

For a little while nothing more was said, and then Mason changed the subject.

"Mac, I guess you'll have to give me my time," he said. "I've got to go into town. I can't say sure when I'll be back, and I reckon maybe I'd better quit."

"What's the matter with you?" asked McIntyre, severely. "Ain't you satisfied? Ain't you bein' well treated? Anything wrong with the pay?"

"No; nothing wrong with the pay, nothing wrong with the treatment. Only it just struck me that I've got some business to attend to in town, and I reckon I'd better do it now than wait until the round-up's over."

"I hate to lose you, Jack," McIntyre said. "Can't you go in and attend to your business and then come back? Take two or three days off. The town ain't so big but what you can do everything you're likely to have to do in the course of twenty-four or forty-eight hours."

"Well," Mason replied, "maybe that's better. I'd like it better, if it suits you; only it don't seem just right for a man to take time off right in the middle of the round-up, just to go into town after his own affairs. So I thought, as I've got to go, maybe you'd rather have me quit for good. Still, if you'll let me take three or four days off, it'll be lots handier for me. I'll leave my horses here with the bunch, and then come back when I get through."

"All right," agreed McIntyre. "Do it your own way."

"Good!" said Mason. "I may as well start now, and then I'll get into town by daylight."

He rose from the fire and presently his cheery whistle was heard coming over the prairie from the direction of the horse herd, and a little later the men in the camp who were just dropping off to sleep heard him throw the saddle on the horse and draw the latigos, and then came the sound of hoofs, trotting off over the prairie and growing fainter and fainter in the distance.

All night long Mason rode through the dark, under the clear stars. It was nearly twenty miles to the wagon road, and after he had reached that, it was more than twenty miles in to the railroad, but the sun had not long risen when he trotted his tired horse down the stragglng street of the forlorn little town. As yet there was hardly a sign of life there. Two or three pigs were rooting in piles of rubbish not far from the road; and a starved-looking cayuse stood humped up at the end of a picket-rope on a bit of prairie where once there had been grass but which now was as bare as the palm of Mason's hand.

As Mason trotted along the street, the door of a house opened, and a man came out carrying a bucket. Mason drew up his horse.

"Hello! Ross," he called.

"Why, hello! Jack," the man replied. "What are you doing down here? I haven't seen you for a dog's age. Four or five years, isn't it, since you were up in Rawlins?"

“Five years,” said Mason; “and since then I’ve been away, up North, and now I’ve drifted back again.”

The two shook hands, and began to exchange news and experiences, each telling the other more or less of what had happened to him since they last parted.

“Well,” said Ross, “how long are you going to be in town? I want to see you before you go.”

“I don’t just know how long I’m going to be here; maybe for a day or two. I’ve got some business I want to attend to here, and as soon as I get through with that I’m liable to move out again. There ain’t much to hold me in this burgh.”

“No,” agreed Ross. “If I had any sort of a job in the open I’d tackle that. By the way,” he added, “did you know that Claib Wood was in town? Seems to me your brother and Claib had some trouble at Rawlins that winter we were all there.”

Mason laughed.

“Sure they had some trouble; and just after it occurred Claib skipped. I never had a chance to speak to him about it. I heard the other day that he was in the country, but I didn’t know that he was here in town.”

“He is,” said Ross; “and if I were you I’d look out for him. Claib was drunk last night, and you know when he’s drunk he’s awful mean, and he certainly is quick with a gun.”

“So I always heard. He’s quick with a gun, and he’s mean; meaner, I expect, when he’s drunk, but mean enough at any time. Now when he shot my brother in Rawlins, they hadn’t had any words, or any quarrel. Rufe told me when he got well that he never did know why Claib shot him, and I always

made up my mind that if I ever saw Claib I'd ask him."

"Well, Jack," cautioned Ross, "if I were you I wouldn't do that. I wouldn't have any words with Claib Wood. You're too good a man to quarrel with him, because if you do quarrel with him, you'll be liable to get killed quick."

"Oh, I don't expect that it's time yet for me to pass in my checks; but if I stay in town for twenty-four hours, and Claib is here, I can't help running up against him somewhere, and I reckon he won't forget whose brother I am."

"No," said Ross; "he won't; that's a sure thing. I'd like to have you avoid him, if you can. Of course, you can't leave town because he's here, and you can't hide because he's here; but I do hope you won't quarrel with him, for he's mighty mean and mighty quick."

"I'll have to do the best I can," replied Mason. "I don't want to get killed, and I don't want to have to kill anybody. See you later, Ross."

He swung into the saddle, and fifty yards farther on turned into the livery barn where he unsaddled his horse, watered it, tied it in a stall and gave it some hay.

At the little eating-place where he went for breakfast he had to wait a long time before anything was cooked, but about the middle of the morning he went back to Ross's house, where he had a pleasant and long talk with him, renewing old times. It was nearly noon when he went up the street again and entered the saloon. Half a dozen men were there. One or two were sitting at card-tables poring over

old newspapers; two were playing a game of cards; and one was standing in front of the counter talking to the bar-tender. A glass of liquor which seemed just to have been filled rested on the counter directly in front of him. The man standing there was Claib Wood. Mason walked quietly into the room without receiving more than a casual glance from any one there, and was standing close to the counter before Wood saw him.

“Well, I’m darned, if this ain’t Jack Mason!” Wood exclaimed. “Where did you come from?”

“Oh, I’ve been cutting little circles over the prairie between here and the British line for five years now, Claib,” Mason answered; “ever since the last time I saw you in Rawlins, just before you shot Rufe. I always wanted to ask you about that. How did you come to shoot him? You didn’t have any quarrel with him, so far as I heard.”

“Say, now, what’s the matter with you, Jack?” exclaimed Claib. “Are you looking for some of the medicine that Rufe got?”

Mason laughed merrily.

“Not a bit, Claib. I’m not looking for anything, without it’s a little information. Of course I’ve heard of bad men that would shoot a fellow down just for meanness; but I never saw one, and I was wondering if you were that kind of man. I was wondering, for example, if I were to turn around and walk to the door here, whether you would plug me before I got there? Now, I don’t know anybody who can tell me about that as well as you.”

Claib’s eyes were bloodshot from his excesses of the night before, and as Mason talked to him an ugly

light seemed to glow in them and the sneer of his face grew more pronounced. The two men were standing face to face rather close together, Claib's right hand and Mason's left hand toward the bar.

"See here, Jack," said Wood, "it looks to me like you're hunting for trouble and trying to pick a quarrel with me, and I don't want nothing of the kind. I come in here to attend to my own business, and I reckon you'd better clear out and attend to yours, if you've got any."

"Sure, I've got some," replied Mason; "but when I saw you in here, I thought we could have a little friendly talk, and maybe you'd tell me why it was that you shot Rufe in Rawlins. As I say, I never could hear that you had any quarrel."

"Well," said Claib—and his hand with a swiftness that the eye could hardly follow, flew around to his hip; but it never reached the butt of his pistol; for Mason with lightning speed shot forward his left hand and caught Claib by the wrist, while with his right hand he seized the glass of liquor resting on the bar and dashed it into Claib's face. Then he wrapped both arms around him, and called to Ross who had just stepped into the door.

"Take this man's gun and mine and keep them! This isn't going to be a shooting-match."

Ross snatched both pistols from their holsters and stood back.

For a moment the men whirled around over the bare floor in a rapid dance, and then Mason suddenly lifted Claib off the floor, held him for an instant in the air above his head, and then threw him an astonishing distance. The man's head and

shoulder coming in contact with the plastered wall burst a large hole in it and loosened some of the weather-boarding on the outside of the building.

Several of the men hastened to Wood and picked him up, expecting to find that his neck was broken. He was senseless and on feeling him they found that his right arm and right collar-bone were broken and the shoulder out of place. None seemed to feel much sympathy for him; he was too well known.

"Now," said Jim Decker, the proprietor of the hotel, "who's going to pay that man's doctor's bills, and who's going to pay for that plaster that you've knocked off, Jack Mason?"

"Why," returned Mason, smiling, "there isn't any doctor in town, so there can't be any doctor's bills; and as for that plaster, if you'll take one of those old newspapers and tack it over the hole, that'll do fine until cold weather comes. When cold weather comes, I'd put a board over it, if I were you."

"Well," snorted Decker, "that's a great note! Coming in and breaking up a man's furniture this way!"

Mason laughed.

"Charge it up to expenses," he said; "that's just one of the incidental expenses of running a saloon."

Decker slouched away behind the counter, grumbling to himself.

By this time, applications of cold water had brought Wood to his senses, but he was more or less dazed and confused. Jack Mason went over and spoke to him.

"Claib, you've got some broken bones now, and you'll have to lie quiet for a while. There isn't any

doctor in town, but I reckon Ross and me can fix you up so you'll be all right, if there's a place for you to stay. Have you got any money?"

"Yes; I've got money enough. But what's the matter with you? Didn't you just start a quarrel with me? And now I've got knocked out. Do you want to mend me up again?"

"That's what," said Mason; "mend you up; and then if I ever have trouble with you again, I won't stop at breaking your arm and collar-bone. I'll break your neck and make it a sure thing that you won't trouble this country any more; but don't let's talk about it now."

Three or four of the men carried Wood to the bedroom on the top floor of the hotel, and Mason and Ross, with the help of the station-agent, managed to set his arm in very good shape, to put the shoulder in place and to bind the arm so that they would presumably do well. Then Jack Mason had a long talk with Ross and the proprietor and made arrangements for them to look after Wood until the railroad company's surgeon could be got hold of.

During the afternoon, Claib had a good deal of fever, and at times was delirious. Ross sat up with him during part of the night and was relieved by Mason, and in the morning the patient was much better and quite rational.

About the middle of the morning Mason came into the room, where Claib was alone.

"Well, Claib," he said, "I see you're better and I reckon now that you'll get along all right. It won't take long for your bones to knit. I'm going off now, but I thought I'd come in and have a little talk with

you before I left. You're a pretty mean man, and you're pretty quick with your gun, and a pretty good cowboy. After you shot Rufe in Rawlins I always made up my mind that I'd have a talk with you if we ever met up together, and now I've had it. You're mean, and I expect that when you get well maybe you'll try to get me; but if I were you I wouldn't do it. You're quick, but it isn't any ways likely that you're the quickest man in the world, or even in Wyoming, or even in Medicine Bow. You tried to draw yesterday, but you weren't quick enough. You may lay for me and get me in that way sometime, but if we ever meet and you try any of your tricks with me, I'm more likely to get you than you are to get me; and I believe it would be a good idea for you to remember that. I don't want to kill you, but if I have to I will.

"Now I've been to see your wife this morning and I've told her that you're laid up, and she says she's willing to take care of you until you're able to get around. You won't be able to move for a week or two now, and I told her she had better leave you here and just kind o' keep track of you, and see that you're comfortable, and not try to take you to her house. She's a good woman, Claib, and if you were smart you'd be good to her."

Claib made no reply to Mason's rather long speech, but his eyes glittered with anger. As Mason turned to go out of the room, Claib glared at him savagely.

"I'll git you yet, Jack Mason!" he cried.

"Better think it over, Claib," Mason called back cheerily.

CHAPTER XV

AN ENGLISHMAN IN CAMP

As Mason stepped out of the saloon, turning up the street toward the stable, he saw Ross walking toward him with a tall, large, red-headed young man, who was evidently an Englishman. As they met, Mason spoke.

"I'm going to start back now, Ross. I've finished up my business here in town."

"Hold on a minute," said Ross. "Here's a man just come in on the passenger this morning, who wants to go out into the country where you're going, and I told him maybe you could help him. Mr. Donald, this is Jack Mason."

"If I can help you, Mr. Donald, I'll be glad to," Mason said as the two shook hands; "but I'm just going back to the round-up camp, forty miles or so from here."

"Well," explained the young man, "I was thinking of going out to Mr. Sturgis's ranch. He lives somewhere up North, about forty miles, I think he told me, from the railroad. Is his place anywhere near your camp?"

"No; but there are two or three of his men along with our outfit, and if you want to come out there with me, some one of them may be going over to his place before long, and could take you there. It's

a perfectly plain road from here out to the ranch, just as soon as a man knows the road, but if he doesn't know it, he's liable to get lost a good many times before he gets there."

"Yes," said Ross, "I told Donald that it was a plain road out to the Sturgis ranch, but that there were about twenty roads turning off from it, and it wouldn't be easy to take the right one."

"Have you got a horse to ride?" asked Mason.

"No," answered Donald, "I have no horse; but I was going to buy a horse and saddle, or perhaps two horses, here in town. Mr. Ross says that he has one that he would either sell or hire, and that he thinks he could find another that I could use as a pack horse."

"Are you used to the saddle?"

"Yes; I have ridden a little."

"Let's go back to my house," said Ross, "and sit down and talk it over, and I can soon find out what we can do about horses."

As they walked back up the street, Ross turned to Mason.

"So you've finished up all your business, have you, Jack?" he asked.

"Yes; I'm ready to pull my freight as soon as I can put the saddle on my horse."

"Well," commented Ross, with a little twinkle of his eye, "it seems to me you got through pretty quick."

"So, so," drawled Mason. "It didn't take me long after I once got at it."

"Well," said Ross, "I don't want to quarrel with you, Jack Mason; but you look to me like the biggest

fool that I've seen since I come into Wyoming Territory."

Mason laughed heartily.

"Come on, come on, Ross," he said. "What's your riddle? What do you mean?"

"Why," Ross answered, "I believe you didn't come into this town for a single thing except to find Claib Wood and break him all up, when the chances were all in his favor that he'd kill you before you could bat an eye."

"Oh, come, Ross," said Mason; "you're doing a lot of guessing. Didn't I tell you when I first came into town that I didn't know that Claib Wood was here?"

"Yes, you did say that, but I'll bet you a new suit of clothes that if you didn't know he was here, you felt mighty sure that he was; and that if you hadn't felt sure you wouldn't have come to town."

"If I had an imagination like yours, Ross," laughed Mason, "and could use a pen a little better than I can, I'd have made a fortune long ago writing for the newspapers."

"Oh, come off, Jack," returned Ross. "I've known you too long. Don't give me any guff of that kind."

They reached the door of Ross's house, and Mason changed the subject.

"I understand that you've got a horse and saddle for Mr. Donald. Is that so?"

"Right," answered Ross.

"Then, suppose you take him around and see if you can get a pack horse and saddle on any terms that'll suit him, and come back here. I'll go up and saddle the two horses, and we can put Mr. Donald's

bed on the one you get; then roll, and get to camp to-morrow morning."

The preparations for the journey did not take long, and the sun was yet two or three hours high when Mason and the young Englishman trotted off over the dry prairie. Mason led the pack horse and Donald rode behind, to urge it on in case this should be necessary, but it went so very well that before long, its hackamore was tied up, and it trotted swiftly on behind or beside Jack Mason's horse, though Donald still rode behind it as a precautionary measure.

About ten o'clock at night they reached the point where the road must be left to go across the prairie to the camp. Here they stopped and removed the saddles from the horses, allowing them to roll and to eat a bite of grass. Then they saddled and started off again; and it was getting light when Mason pointed out to Donald the white wagon covers of the camp, and the cattle that dotted the hillsides not far from it. Mason had told Donald that he would better turn his animals into the *cávaya* the next day, in order that they might rest, and had suggested that he himself might like to ride in the bed wagon and sleep during the day, but the Englishman very quietly said that he thought he would go along with some part of the outfit, if he had a horse which he could ride.

As the new arrivals sat by the fire, waiting for the announcement of breakfast, the sleepy cowboys rose one by one from their beds, and after dousing their heads and arms in cold water, gathered around the fire. Breakfast was soon over, and just as the men were saddling up, Jack Danvers and Vicente, who had been on the last relief of the night herd,

came trotting into camp. Jack was introduced to Donald, who told him he was headed for Swift Water Ranch when he could get there, and the two young men shook hands cordially.

"I have been out in this western country two or three times," said Donald, "but this is the first time I have stopped in a cow camp. It must be very interesting and full of excitement, I should think."

"Well," said Jack, "that depends on what you call excitement. I can tell you it is full of hard work; and just about as soon as the bloom of novelty has worn off, hard work is all you see of it. I can remember when I was a little fellow that I used to think it would be the greatest fun in the world to have a string of horses and ride around wearing shaps and clinking spurs, and maybe with a silver saddle-horn; but I have seen too much of it to care for it greatly now. How is it with you, Joe?" he asked, turning to Tulare Joe, who stood rolling a cigarette by the fire, with his horse's bridle rein over his arm.

"Well, Jack, I guess you've been through some school and have learned some lesson. Cow punching is awful good fun to read about, but reading is the best part of it. Books don't ever tell you how thick the dust is, nor how dry you get, nor how sore you become from riding, nor how mean a horse or a cow or a steer can be. No, the books leave out all that sort of thing."

"Well, Mr. Donald," said Jack, "you are going along with us for a few days until you get a chance to go over to Uncle Will's, aren't you?"

"Yes," answered Donald; "that is what I should

like to do. But if I am going to stay in the camp, I should like to be of some use. I don't want to just ride a horse up and down and nothing else. I'd like to earn my grub, if I do nothing more."

"Mason says you have no horses to ride," said Jack; "and, of course, on a round-up a man cannot do much without horses."

"No," admitted Donald; "but I was wondering whether I could not hire three or four horses — say one from each of four or five men, so that I could really do some riding. I would enjoy the experience; and, while I do not know anything about the work, I fancy I could learn. Of course, I am more or less used to the saddle."

"Of course you could learn," replied Jack. "It is just riding and being able to put your string on an animal when you need to."

"There is where I am weak," Donald said. "I know nothing about roping. Of course, if a horse is walking in a corral I can put a noose over his head; but as for standing off and throwing it far, I cannot do that."

"That's easy to learn," explained Joe, as he threw down the end of the brand with which he had lighted his cigarette. "Any of us could teach you all you have to know about that in a mighty short while."

"What are you going to do to-day?" asked Jack.

"Why, Mason said that he would lend me a horse out of his string for the day, as both of mine traveled all night, and I thought I would ride along either with the cattle herd or the horse bunch, and use my eyes as much as I could."

"That's a good idea," said Jack. "Now Joe and

I are going out with the cattle herd to-day, and if you want to come with us, you can see something, and I think you can learn something too."

"Ripping," was Donald's answer.

"Well, I'll go over and see Mason and find out what horse he wants you to ride and then we'll get started; but, hold on, here's Mason now;" and a moment later Mason rode up to the fire and handed to Donald the rope that was about the neck of a small but beautiful bay horse.

"Have you fixed on what you're going to do, Donald?" he asked; and Donald told him what they had decided on.

"That's bully," said Mason. "I'm riding with the herd to-day, so we'll be together again."

As they rode off toward the herd, Donald turned to Jack.

"It seems to me that Mason is a great man," he said.

"How do you mean?"

"Why, all last night as we rode along he was singing and whistling and making jokes, and telling funny stories. Three or four times I nearly fell off my horse from laughing at him; and yet the day before that, according to the story, he beat up a man in town so that he will have to be in bed for six weeks."

"Beat up a man!" exclaimed Jack. "That couldn't have been Mason."

"Why," said Donald, in some confusion, "I hope it is not a secret. Everybody in town was talking about it. I was only there a few hours, and five or six men spoke to me about it. It seems that a man there tried to draw his gun on Mason, and Mason

was too quick for him. He picked him up and threw him pretty nearly through the side of the house and almost broke his neck."

"Great Cæsar's ghost!" exclaimed Jack. "That will be news to everybody in this camp."

"Hold on," said Donald; "I wish you would not say anything about it until somebody else does. I do not want to be carrying gossip around from one place to another; but, as I told you, it was the only thing that they were talking about in town day before yesterday. I fancy it is the most exciting thing that has happened there for a long time."

"Yes," assented Jack, "I guess it's quiet enough there most of the time; but say, what was the name of this man that Mason got into a quarrel with?"

"I cannot remember what the full name was, but almost everybody spoke of him as 'Claib.' I do not know any such name as that, but I suppose it may be a nickname."

"Good Lord!" cried Jack; "why that must be Claib Wood! They say he is one of the worst men in the country—a regular killer. He was ordered away from here because he was suspected of cattle stealing—and they say that there is hardly anybody in the country as quick with a gun as he is."

"Well, he was not quick enough for Mason, it seems," said Donald. "I asked one of the men in the saloon how it happened, and he said it was so quick he really did not know how it did happen. He said that the two men seized hold of each other, and that Mason called out to somebody to take away both guns, that there was not to be a shooting-match; and then a minute or two later Mason lifted up Claib and

threw him against the side of the house and through the plaster and almost out through the boards. I saw the place and it certainly did look as if something very heavy had been thrown against the wall."

"I'd like to know just what happened," said Jack; "but one could not very well ask Mason; and I suppose we will have to wait until somebody comes out from town to tell us the news."

"If you don't mind, I'd rather not have you say anything about what I have told you, to any one here, for, as I say, I do not want to be carrying tales."

"All right," promised Jack; "I'll keep quiet. But say, it seems to me that this thing is one of the biggest jokes that ever was. I think a lot of Mason and it seems to me that he was in great danger if he was quarreling with Claib Wood; but you seem to have brought him back perfectly well and sound."

The young Englishman grinned.

"Oh, yes; I brought him back."

All day long the men kept with the herd, and all day long the young Englishman was practising throwing the rope, so that toward evening he had a good idea of how to handle it, though oftener than not he missed the object at which he was throwing. At the same time he was learning the eccentricities of the rope, and a little more practise was likely to make him reasonably skilful. All the boys insisted that practise, practise, practise was the only way in which he could become expert, and Donald determined that he would devote much time to this work for the next two or three days.

That night at the fire, Jack, with a grave face, and having warned Donald to be careful, began to ply

Hugh and McIntyre with questions about Claib Wood, asking how bad he was, whether he had killed many men, and other pointed and pertinent questions. He seemed most anxious for all possible particulars as to Claib Wood.

All the time he was watching Jack Mason, who, sitting by the fire with an awl and a piece of buckskin string, was mending a pair of ripped shoes. Mason, however, gave not the slightest evidence of interest in the conversation, and at last Jack was obliged to abandon his examination of the two older men, feeling that he had wholly failed in his efforts to make Mason respond.

CHAPTER XVI

A LESSON IN ROPING

THE next day was devoted to cutting cattle and branding calves, and Jack told Donald that this was his chance to practise roping. Jack very hospitably, since Donald was to be the guest of his uncle, gave him his own rope which was in excellent condition, and provided himself with a second one, which had been used only a few times and so was somewhat hard and stiff. Donald was much interested in the work, and anxious to see how it was done, and Jack promised that, so far as he could, he would look after him, and coach him in the work of catching calves.

“But you’ll have to look out for yourself and do the best you can,” he added, “for there is no time for school-work on the round-up. Very likely you’ll make lots of breaks, and the fellows will make lots of fun of you; but that you’ll have to stand. They’re all good-natured, but everybody that makes a mistake or blunder gets laughed at in a cow camp. It isn’t likely that you’ll be able to catch calves by their feet. What you’d better do for a starter is to try and catch ’em by their necks, and not throw ’em, but just sort of lead and drag ’em over to where the boys are.”

“All right,” agreed Donald; “I suppose that’s the

best thing that I can do. I don't understand this business of catching animals by their feet, and you'll have to tell me about that, before long. I'll try to catch them by the neck, and lead them over; but I haven't a great deal of confidence that I'll do much with it."

The men who were cutting that morning were Charley Powell, Jack Danvers and Jack Mason. Before long it happened that Jack drove a cow and calf over toward the Sturgis bunch, and as Donald was nearby Jack beckoned to him.

"Put your rope on the calf and lead it over to the fire," he called as Donald rode up.

Donald made ready to catch the calf and, though a little slow, he made a good throw before the calf was near the bunch; but unfortunately the loop was so large that the calf jumped through it and was following its mother into the Sturgis herd when Jack, shaking with laughter, threw his rope, caught the calf by the feet and started it for the fire. Donald, much mortified, slowly gathered up his rope and overtook Jack before he had reached the fire.

"That must have seemed a pretty stupid thing to you, but what was the matter?" he asked.

"Why," explained Jack, "your loop was too big, and the beast ran through it. If you had had experience enough you would have seen that your loop was too big, and that it was going beyond the calf's head, and by jerking up your throwing hand you could have stopped the loop so that it would have fallen just over the calf's head, and it would have run against the noose with its chest and been caught. Usually you can get right close to a calf and then

throw with a small loop and a rather short rope; but, as I tell you, this is all a matter of practise."

"I am going to watch you," said Donald, "and the next time you cut a calf out, I will try it over again."

"That's right," declared Jack. "If you stay with it you will certainly get there."

But Donald had to learn the lessons of experience. With the next calf that he tried to rope he did better, but, being unable to control his rope properly, the calf's head and fore-feet went through the loop. He threw up his hand too late and caught the beast around the middle, and it gave as lively an exhibition of bucking as a three-month-old calf could furnish. The cow had gone on into the bunch and Jack was watching her, and, fearing lest she should turn about and come out to fight, he put his string over the calf's head and led and dragged it to the fire while Donald meekly followed at the other end of his rope.

The boys at the fire shrieked with laughter when they saw what had happened, and declared that they would not cast the rope loose; while Donald did not know how to free it.

"Just put that rope under the iron here, and we'll mark it for keeps," one boy shouted.

Donald made no response except to smile and shake his head. He took it all very good-naturedly, and when his rope was turned loose gathered it up and again helped Jack drive the calf to the bunch.

"That's all right," said Jack. "You are improving; but you have got to keep on practising. It does not take one day nor one year to make a man a good

roper. Now I am no roper myself, and yet I have been doing it pretty nearly every summer for the last five or six years."

Donald's third trial was successful. He rode up pretty near to the calf and threw with a short rope and, catching the beast, he turned his horse and dragged the calf up to the fire. When he got there he was received by the boys with more laughter and louder shouts than before. They declared that this could not be Donald; that it must be some one else disguised to resemble him, for it was perfectly well known that Donald never caught calves except around the middle.

Jack, however, was greatly delighted with his new friend's success, and congratulated him warmly on the progress that he was making.

All through the morning they worked hard and all were glad when dinner time came and there was a chance for a little rest. Most of the men saddled fresh horses and those holding the herds were relieved and had an opportunity to get something to eat. Jack and Donald were sent out to hold the Sturgis bunch, and while they were out there, and a little later when they pushed the cattle off to one side to feed, Donald asked Jack to tell him something more about the art of roping.

"You men here catch your calves by the feet, and I've heard," said Donald, "that there are men who can catch any foot of a running animal, if you ask them to. That seems perfectly impossible to me; and in fact it seems to me impossible that anybody could catch the feet of a running animal, but of course I've seen it done to-day."

“Yes,” replied Jack, “it is done all the time. It is easy enough to catch an animal by his fore feet, or his hind feet, or by one fore foot or one hind foot, but I am not enough of a roper, and I don’t believe I ever shall be, to pick up any foot when I am asked to.”

“Well, I can’t expect you to tell me how to do things that you say you cannot do yourself, but I would like to understand how to catch an animal by the feet.”

Jack laughed.

“Why, that’s like most other things in the world: awful simple when you know how to do it, or even how it is done. You just throw your rope so that the animal steps into it either with his hind feet or with his fore feet, as the case may be, but you’ve got to pull your rope just at the right time. That is to say, if the beast puts his fore feet into the noose lying on the ground, and you leave the noose lying there, why the critter won’t get caught. You’ve got to give a lift and pull on your rope just at the right moment.”

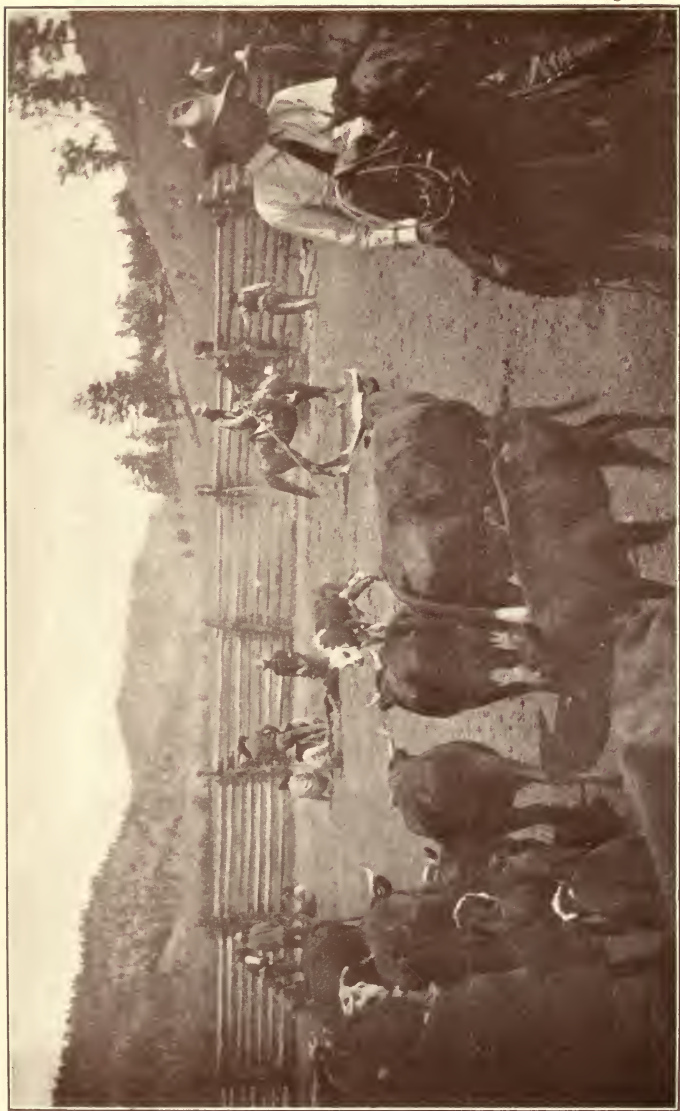
“That seems simple enough,” declared Donald; “or at least it seems as if it would be simple enough to a man who knows how to rope.”

“Yes,” said Jack, “but it takes some judgment. You’ve got to put your rope in the right place, and then, as I said, you’ve got to pull on it at the right time. You may see boys catching animals by any foot before we get through this round-up, and it is constantly done on the prairie with horses that are mean. If you want to learn how to rope, and to see roping well done, you’d better watch Vicente, or

Tulare Joe, who was raised in California with the Mexicans there. He handles a rope better than anybody else in the camp, except Vicente and Juan who are Mexicans. As for Charley Powell and Jack Mason and myself, we are just plain ordinary ropers that can catch horses and cows most of the time but can't do any fancy tricks with a rope the way those Mexicans can. I've seen one or two Mexicans do things with a rope that made my eyes stick out about a foot; but some Americans are pretty good. They tell of a man down on the plains—in Nebraska, I believe—who once when roping calves in a corral, caught and took to the fire a hundred and ten calves in a hundred and ten throws. He didn't miss a single throw."

"I should like to see something of that kind; but for the present I guess plain roping will occupy my attention. There is another thing I want to ask you. Are the Indians good ropers?"

"Fair," answered Jack, "but nothing to brag of—nothing great. They do as well as any of us ordinary cowboys. There is an interesting thing about that—something that Hugh once told me—that a good many years ago, when Hugh first came into the country—that was in 1849—the Indians could hardly rope at all. All the same they used to catch lots of wild horses by just running them down. The country then was full of wild horses. In the spring when the wild horses were poor and weak, the Indians used to take their best horses and start out and find a bunch of the wild horses and chase them as hard as they could, and finally catch them. But they did not know how to rope them. They used to make



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Photo. by Mrs. A. C. Stokes, Lame Deer, Mont.

big hoops of willows and tie the noose of the rope to such a hoop with small strings; then when they had run down an animal, so that they could ride up alongside of it, they would pass the hoop over its head and pull back on the rope; the strings which tied it to the hoop would break, the noose would run up, and the animal could be choked down.

“Of course, they could never catch good horses; those that they got were mostly colts or mares heavy with foal, and animals that were particularly weak from lack of food and the winter’s cold.

“The Indians that I’ve seen did not appear to me to handle their horses very well, and they have no more feeling for a horse than they have for a saddle or a travois. They never consider that a horse has any feelings: it is simply a tool to help them get about and to bear burdens. The Indians are really kind-hearted, but my notion is they just don’t happen to think of the suffering they may cause the horse. Indians are kind to each other and to their friends, but I don’t think you could call them kind to animals.”

“I suppose that is a matter of education,” suggested Donald.

“I suppose so,” answered Jack. “Besides that, when you are all the time struggling with an animal, or a lot of animals, and trying to make them do something that you want them to do, and that they don’t understand, you get kind o’ mad at them because they don’t mind you. You forget that they don’t understand, and you are likely to be brutal to them. Now, for example, I was thinking to-day that it would be a good idea for you, after you get to know how to use a rope a little better, to practise on

some of these cows, catching them and throwing them, but I don't suppose a cow very much enjoys being thrown, and it is a question which is the more important, for you to have practise in throwing cows, or to spare the cow the grief of being thrown. I don't suppose it is very pleasant for an animal running at full speed to be checked up and made to turn a somersault and hit the ground like a thousand of —beef we'll say."

"No," Donald said slowly; "I guess not; and I think the question you have suggested is rather a nice one."

"Well, we needn't worry about that. There will be plenty of chances for you to practise on cows before long; and meantime you've got to learn to catch calves."

The boys had an idle, easy time watching this bunch of cattle which was constantly being added to by animals cut out from the big bunch. Before evening all the cattle had been separated and Jack and Donald rode back to the camp together.

Supper over, the boys sat about the fire lazily smoking and talking. After a while there was a pause, which was presently broken by McIntyre.

"I met one of the boys from the Bar Lazy A to-day when I was riding. He was going back to the ranch. Said he had been sent in with a message and spent a day or two in town. I asked him if he had seen anything of Claib Wood, and he said yes, he met him a couple of nights ago; that Claib was full, and looked as if he were hunting trouble. Then he said the next day they had quite a little excitement in town — let's see, Mason, that must have been about

the time you were there. Did you hear of any excitement?"

Mason had looked up quickly when McIntyre began to speak and then lowered his eyes and was looking at the fire.

"Why, no, Mac," he replied; "I didn't see anything that excited me very much. The town seemed about as usual—dogs lying in the sun, asleep; two or three men reading a month-old newspaper; lots of flies buzzing in the windows; passenger comes in once a day going east, once a day going west, and freight trains happen along occasionally. Not much excitement in town."

At this answer, the usually grave McIntyre slapped his thigh and burst into a loud guffaw.

"Bully for you, Jack Mason!" he cried. "You've got some sense of humor, darned if you ain't. Why, boys," he went on, addressing the group, "this is what Red Casey of the Bar Lazy A told me. He said that the other morning—meaning the morning Jack Mason here got to town—he was settin' in Jim Decker's saloon playin' a little game of poker with Slim Jim Rutherford, when Jack here come into the saloon. Claib Wood had been drunk all the night before, and had just come in for his morning nip. Jack here walked up to him and they talked for two or three minutes and then Claib tried to draw his gun. In a jiffy Jack grabbed him and held him and called to Ross to take both guns away; and then after a minute Jack picked Claib up and threw him across the room so hard that when he hit the wall and fell on the floor his arm and collar-bone were broken, and his shoulder was out of joint. Claib hit the wall so

hard that the boys thought he was dead; but it seems not, and it's a darned pity too. Now, Jack Mason, why didn't you tell us all this when you came back from town?"

The boys shouted with laughter, but Mason said nothing — only continued to look at the fire.

When the tumult of cheers and jokes had somewhat died down, McIntyre repeated his question, but without receiving an answer. Then he turned and looked over toward Donald.

"Say, boys, there's another criminal here, it seems to me. Here's this Britisher that came out the other night with Jack Mason. He must have known all about the thing, and I would like to know why he didn't tell us. He's tryin' to learn how to be a cowboy, but he sure will never learn to be a good cowboy until he's ready to give the news, and to make fun of any other puncher that he gets a chance to josh."

After a moment, Donald spoke.

"Well, Mr. McIntyre, I am new at the cowboy business," he said. "I have only been trying to learn it for a day or two, and so I cannot be expected to do my work very well. I did tell one boy when I got here, and it made him laugh so much that I got a little scared and asked him not to say anything about it until the news reached the boys in some other way. Isn't that so, Jack Danvers?"

"Sure," vouched Jack. "Donald told me the whole story the morning he got in, and I wanted to make a whoop and hurrah about it right off, but he begged me not to, because he didn't want to be counted a gossip. Don't you remember last night, when I

was asking you men all those questions about Claib Wood? I was watching Jack Mason all the time to see if he would make any sign, but he never let on that he had even seen Claib Wood when he was in town."

This speech of Jack's called forth a series of yells of delight from the little company. Many jokes were made; and Jack Mason, becoming somewhat embarrassed, finally rose and went to his blankets. The other boys soon afterward dispersed to their beds.

CHAPTER XVII

DRIFTING

THE next night Jack, Vicente and Tulare Joe went out on night herd for the second relief. It was very dark, the sky was pitchy black and the wind blew now and then in swift gusts.

"It's a mean night," Joe said as they rode along, "and I wouldn't be surprised if we had trouble with the cattle."

"It sure looks as if it were going to storm," Jack agreed; "and nobody can tell just what that will mean."

When they reached the herd, the men whom they were to relieve declared that so far the cattle were all right, but feared that the threatening storm would start them moving. Some of them decided that they would stay with the cattle until the storm broke, or passed over. "It's going to storm," they said, "and there's no use in going back to camp and getting into our blankets, only to be called out again in a few minutes." There was thus a double guard, and the men followed each other at shorter intervals than usual, singing, talking and calling, in the effort to give the cattle, which as yet were quiet, the confidence which so often seems to come from the proximity of a human being.

Presently it began to rain a little, and the wind

blew harder, and in fierce gusts, with lulls between them. During such lulls, the wind could be heard coming far off, and in the blasts of wind the men to the windward of the cattle could not hear the sounds made by those to leeward.

By this time the cattle had begun to rise to their feet and to walk about, bawling. Then some of them, singly or by twos and threes, started out from the main bunch to walk away to leeward, only to be turned back by the men who came across them. Then, little by little, the whole bunch began to move along, but still only at a walk.

Jack spoke to Vicente in what he thought was a loud tone of voice, but the wind snatched his words away and Vicente, putting his hand up to his ear, leaned over toward Jack, who repeated his question.

“Shall we try to hold them, or just let them drift, and stay with them?”

“Must let ’em drift,” shouted Vicente, “but keep ’em together. Pretty soon some boys from camp will come. Must let ’em drift until storm stops, or they get shelter. The best thing is for three of us to get ahead, and go slow with the wind, and one man get on each side.”

Jack rode off to speak to such other men as he could find, and presently from up the wind came the sound of galloping hoofs, which then slowed down to a trot, and in a little while almost the whole force of the camp except the cook and the night horse wrangler were about the herd, moving along at the same pace with it, guarding it carefully in front and carefully on either side, and leaving the rear of the herd open.

The wind blew with the violence of a tornado and

the occasional spits of level rain which accompanied the storm stung the face. One or two men who had been slow about tying on their hats lost them with little prospect of ever recovering them. The cattle were uncomfortable and moved along bellowing, but showed no disposition to run. On the sides they sometimes tried to scatter, but the line of boys riding there kept them turned back.

This went on for some hours, until Jack thought that daylight must be near. His slicker was on his saddle, but at no time had it seemed to rain hard enough to justify his stopping and putting it on, for at every moment there had seemed either something to be done, or a possibility that quick action might be required; so by this time he was pretty wet and pretty cold, but he thought little of this in his anxious watching of the cattle. Presently, however, he happened to turn his eyes upward, and saw three or four bright stars looking down at him from the sky, and he gave a whoop of joy for he knew that the storm had about blown itself out. Soon the wind began to fall and then the eastern horizon to lighten, and before very long the bright sun rose in a clear sky, and their troubles for the time were over.

The weary cowboys turned the herd and drove the cattle back over the trail they had followed, until they reached their old bed ground. There they turned them loose under the charge of two or three men, and all the others returned to camp for breakfast, which, as a matter of fact, was now dinner, for it was high noon.

"Boys," said McIntyre while they were eating their meal. "we may as well stop here now and rest up;

but, Jack and Joe and Donald, as soon as you've eaten, you three go out and relieve those fellows on herd, and let them come in and get some dinner. After these boys have slept two or three hours, I will send men out to relieve you."

The cattle, like the cow punchers, were tired, and as soon as they had grazed a while they lay down, showing no disposition to move. The boys, therefore, took a commanding position on a hill and holding the ropes of their horses allowed them to feed about them.

"Of course, that was not a stampede, Joe?" asked Donald uncertainly.

"Not much," said Joe. "That was just plain ordinary drifting; but there was one while, just before the cattle started, when I thought that it was nip and tuck whether we would have a stampede or not. It would not have taken much to start those cattle off, and it sure would have been a bad night to ride in front of 'em and to turn 'em."

"I don't see how a man could ride fast over such a country as we crossed," Donald said.

"Well," said Jack, "could, or could not, he'd just have had to. It's a ground-hog case when a stampede is on."

"But I should think you'd break your neck; and kill all your horses."

"Well," declared Joe, "sometimes a man falls and breaks his neck, and oftener still a horse falls and breaks his neck or a leg, but of course the cattle have got to be turned. That's what we're hired for, and it's our business to do our work."

"You spoke before about turning the cattle.

Where do you want to turn them to, and why do you want to turn them?"

"We want to turn 'em to get 'em to mill, and if we once get 'em milling, the trouble is pretty well over."

"I am sorry to seem so dull," said Donald, "but what do you mean by milling?"

"Why, we want to turn the cattle and get 'em running around in a circle. The hind ones will follow the lead ones, and if you can turn the lead ones, and keep 'em turning, after awhile they just keep running around and around in a circle and the hind ones follow 'em, and as you can understand, they don't get very far away."

"Now, certainly," exclaimed the Englishman, "that is very clever. I never should have thought of that. But how do you manage to turn them? Of course, you cannot go in front of them, because they would run over you and kill you."

"You do go in front of 'em; and without you go in front of 'em, you surely can't turn 'em. What a puncher does is to get right up even with the head of the herd and maybe a little in front of it, and then to keep edging over so as to push the head of the herd away from him. Likely too he's got to make some gun play, because, of course, the flash and noise of the shots close to 'em will tend to push the cattle over. Sometimes men go right in front of 'em and try to stop 'em by shooting, but I never saw much good done in that way.

"I reckon if you ask Vicente, or any of the older men here — McIntyre, for example — he'll tell you that it counts for more to try to push the cattle over

from one side than it does to go in front of 'em and try to stop 'em. If you do that they may turn; but what's just as likely to happen is that they'll split and go off in two or three bunches — and that's likely to mean that the whole country has got to be ridden again to gather up these scattered cattle."

"It must require an extraordinary amount of courage on a black night such as last night to ride in front of, or even up at the head of, a herd of frightened cattle going as hard as they can," said Donald. "I am sure that I could not have ridden fast last night and guided my horse at all. I could not see my horse's ears, to say nothing of the ground in front of him."

"No," Jack said; "I guess you couldn't. I've never been yet in a real stampede, but I'd be willing to bet that the cow puncher who rode at the head of a stampede and tried to look out and guide his horse on to good ground would not be worth very much a month to his employer. How is that, Joe?"

Joe laughed.

"I guess he'd be worth about seventy-five cents a month; and he'd have to furnish his own grub, too."

"But what do you mean?" asked Donald.

"Why," explained Joe, "a man riding fast and at night don't try to pick his ground — he can't try to pick the ground. He leaves that to his horse; it's up to him to watch the cattle, and it's up to the horse to keep on his four legs. If the rider doesn't watch the cattle and the horse doesn't keep on his legs, why horse and rider both are out of it, and of no use to anybody."

"That's just what I supposed," said Jack. "I re-

member once a good many years ago Hugh gave me a lecture on horses, and the use they make of their eyes; he told me about how many falls young stock have before they are broken, and how much use horses must make of their eyes. You can see that if you put a blind on a horse, he will stand perfectly still, no matter how wild he is, and will let you do 'most anything with him. Take the use of his eyes away from him, and a horse is pretty nearly afraid to move."

"Sure thing," declared Joe, as he scratched a match to light a cigarette that he had just finished rolling; "a prairie or a mountain horse can go along in the dark without anybody guiding him a great deal better than he could if driven by the sharpest-sighted man."

"Donald might like to see it, but I hope with all my heart that we won't have a stampede on this round-up," Jack said.

"I hope not," replied Joe. "I have known of one man being killed and several men being hurt in stampedes, and if I can keep out of 'em I mean to do it. Now, look here, if one of you fellows will lend me his watch I'll set here and look after these cattle for an hour, and you two can go to sleep; then, after an hour, I'll call one of you and sleep myself, and an hour later he can call the other. By that time likely there'll be somebody out to relieve us."

"No," protested Donald; "you and Jack sleep, and let me watch. I have done less work than any one since I came here, and I can sit on this hill in the sun and see what the cattle are doing. If they make any movement I can call one of you."

“All right,” assented Joe; “that’ll suit me, if you feel like it.”

Jack and Joe stretched themselves out on the ground and with their hats over their faces were soon breathing heavily in deep sleep. Donald sat on the hill and watched the cattle, but as time passed he grew more and more sleepy until finally he had almost made up his mind to stretch out and close his eyes — not really to sleep but just to think. However, as he looked at his watch just before this desire became overpowering, he saw that only ten minutes remained of his vigil, and so kept himself awake until it was time to call one of the others.

Joe on being roused shook himself, rose and walked a few yards back and forth in either direction and then, thoroughly awake, sat down and began to roll and smoke cigarettes.

Before the time came to call Jack, Mason and Charley Powell appeared on the scene, saying that they would stay with the cattle until it was time to bed them down. The other three gladly mounted their horses, trotted into camp and threw themselves on the ground in the shade, where they slept until the cook shouted the call for supper.

After the meal was over Jack sat down by the fire close to the Mexican.

“Vicente,” he said, “I was mighty glad I bumped up against you last night, for I had no idea what had to be done. Of course, when I recognized your horse I knew that you could tell me.”

“Yes,” drawled Vicente between puffs of his cigarette, “last night, most had cattle running, what you say *estampeda*. Pretty lucky the other men got

there. If once those cattle had started, we'd have had to ride hard."

"There was one while," said Jack Mason, "that I was plumb lost. I was riding that little whittley-dig pony of mine, and he stepped in a hole and fell down and I rolled off. It was so black I couldn't see anything. Reaching around I happened to feel the horse. I mounted, but I was all turned around. I didn't have an idea which way the cattle were, and I couldn't see nor hear 'em. Of course I knew the only thing to do was to let my horse find the cattle; and that's what he did; but until I got close to 'em I didn't know where they were, nor anything about 'em."

"Mighty queer." commented Hugh, who was listening, "the way a man can get turned around, if he can't use his eyes. I reckon I've told you, son," he added, turning to Jack, "about the only time I ever got lost. It was on pretty nearly level ground that I had never been on before, and in a blinding snow-storm. Well, sir, I had no more idea of the direction of the sun, moon or stars than just nothing at all. For a little way I traveled by the wind, and then I stopped and made up my mind that I'd wait until something happened; and I did have to wait for twenty-four long hours before I got a glimpse of the sun."

"I had something like that happen to me once in thick timber that had been burned over," Jack Mason said. "It was a cloudy day on a kind of plateau, and every tall straight stick looked like every other tall straight stick. A mighty mean situation to be in."

“It must be a terrible sensation,” said Donald, “to lose all sense of direction. Long ago, before I had ever been much out of doors, I used to carry a compass and to consult it frequently, but of late years I have rather abandoned that practise.”

“When the sky is clear you don’t need a compass or anything else,” said Jack, “because you can look at the sun or the stars; but, of course, if it’s cloudy, or rainy, or snowy, that’s different. If a man is in a country he knows, or knows anything about, and gets lost he can follow the ravines and creeks down to the main stream.”

“Well,” put in Hugh, “a man isn’t in much danger of being lost just as long as he keeps his wits about him; but just as soon as he gets scared and loses his wits and begins to think that the sun is in the wrong place, or the compass is wrong, or the waters are running uphill, then he’s in a bad way, because he’s pretty close to crazy. The main thing is to keep your head, and then you’ll come out all right; but in these days, when there are so many fences and roads and railroads all over the country it would be pretty hard to be lost, I expect.”

“Yet back East,” said Jack, “every now and then we hear about men and women and children being lost in little pieces of swamp and woods almost within hearing of their houses. Of course, these are people who have never thought of taking care of themselves out of doors, and get lost just as soon as they get where they can’t see things that they recognize.”

“Such people ought not to be allowed to wander away,” drawled Jack Mason; “they ought to have people to look after them. But then I suppose back

East there are so many houses and so many people that it's hard to get out of sight of 'em."

"No," laughed Jack; "there are a good many people there, but it isn't quite so bad as you say."

Hugh knocked the ashes from his pipe, rose to his feet, and stretched.

"Well, good night, boys; I'm going to hunt my blankets," he said.

The others soon followed him and the fire was deserted.

CHAPTER XVIII

A STAMPEDE

JACK was destined to be disappointed in his hope that he would not see a real stampede.

Toward evening of the very next day the sky clouded over in the late afternoon and there was a little rain. Night fell damp and drizzly, but there was nothing to lead any one to believe that there would be trouble. Jack went on night herd with the last relief, and with him rode Charley Powell, Donald and Mason. The herd was quiet, and the boys whom they relieved started back to camp, while the four who had come out began to ride about the cattle at a walk. For an hour or more the quiet continued, and there was no warning of any excitement.

Half asleep, Jack was riding along, when suddenly from the bed ground came a drumming of hoofs and a rattling of horns, constantly growing louder, and Jack knew that the whole herd were rushing directly toward him. In an instant, everything that he had ever heard about stampedes flashed through his memory, and he knew that the first thing he must do would be to get out of the way of the rushing cattle, and then that he must stay with the leaders.

The mind works quickly in such a case, and the horse, which often knows as much about handling cattle as the rider, is ready to do the right thing.

With the first sound of the rushing herd, Jack's legs closed on his horse and it felt the spurs, and a short dash to one side took horse and rider out of the path of the dense mass of cattle which swept close behind them. Automatically, as it seemed, the horse turned and kept along with the bunch. Jack remembered that for a little while it was useless to try to do anything except keep up; he must wait until the cattle had become strung out, the swiftest ones leading and the others following. To try to turn the closely packed herd as it started would be hopeless. The only thing to do was to let them get well strung out, and then to ride up close to the leaders and push them over to one side.

In a short time Jack could tell from the sound that most of the bunch was behind him. He began to swing over to his left, so as to get close to the leaders. He thought that they must have run a mile.

Pushing up to the leaders, and constantly riding closer to them, he shouted and began to shoot his pistol, and as he drew nearer he was gratified to know that the cattle were crowding away from him. He was right with the leading animals. It was pitch dark and nothing could be seen, but the sound of the pounding hoofs, the clatter of horns as they struck against one another, and the puffing and snorting, told him that he was close among them.

Suddenly and without warning, Jack's horse turned a somersault. Jack flew a long way, and alighted on his back with a thump that almost knocked the breath out of him. Almost as he hit the ground, he heard his horse scramble to his feet and gallop off. He had no time to think about whether he had his breath

or not, or whether his horse were lost. He was thinking of the cattle that were following the leaders he had just left, and realizing that in a few moments the whole bunch might run over him. He ran a few steps in the hope that he could get away, climbed a little bank and began to shout, to fire his gun and to shake the skirts of his slicker. He could hear cattle passing on both sides of him. Every now and then one would come near enough to be seen as a dim shadow; and as the animal saw the dancing, shouting man it would give a loud snort and jump sideways, while Jack would jump the other way, sometimes almost in front of another animal which perhaps would snort and make a sweep of its horns or turn and kick at him. For a little while Jack had more excitement than had ever been compressed into a like space of time in his experience. He had no opportunity to think much of the danger, or to get frightened. All he could think about was to make all the noise he could, and to frighten away from himself the already terrified cattle.

Presently the rush of the cattle ceased. Jack reloaded his six-shooter, and then had time to collect his wits and to begin to wonder what had happened. He had seen nothing to make the cattle start, and did not know why they had done so. He had little or no idea why his horse had fallen, but when he began to move about, it was apparent that the animal had run into a shallow gulch which it had not seen, and thus had tripped. It was lucky for Jack that he had not tried to stick to the horse after it was evident that it must fall, but had let go and tried to get away from it. It was lucky also that he had clung to his

six-shooter, for without doubt the shots that he fired after he was afoot had helped to turn the cattle from him.

Jack knew that it could not be far to camp, but his tumble and the excitement of the last few minutes had caused him wholly to lose his sense of direction. He knew that the only thing for him to do was to stay where he was until daylight broke, and then to make his way back to camp on foot. As soon as he could see, and so get his bearings, there would be no trouble in finding camp, where he could get a fresh horse; and as soon as day came the boys would of course start out to find the cattle.

It was still drizzling. Jack walked about a little to find some place to sit down and presently stumbled over an elevation which his hand told him was an ant-hill — one of those heaps of coarse sand a foot and a half or two feet high, which the ants throw up in high country. On this Jack sat down, for the ants would not be stirring until the hill had dried off, and he knew that it would not dry until the sun came up. Oddly enough he did not feel stiff or sore, and he concluded he must have landed on some big clump of brush which had broken his fall.

He sat there a few minutes, meditating on what had happened, when presently very faintly he heard the hoof-beats of a slowly jogging horse, which was drawing nearer and nearer.

“I wonder,” thought Jack, “if that’s my horse going back to camp? It would be great if I could catch him and ride in. The cattle are gone, and they can’t be found until day.”

The hoof-beats drew nearer and nearer, and pres-

ently seemed to be passing Jack, not very far off. He hurried toward the sound, calling out as he did so:

“Whoa, lad! Whoa, lad!”

“Hello, who’s that?” came Donald’s voice.

“Come over here, Donald,” called Jack. “My horse fell with me and has gone off, and I’m waiting here for daylight to come to get back to camp. Where have you been?”

“Why,” explained Donald, “I tried to follow those cattle, but they all ran away from me; and now I’m trying to get to camp, but my horse don’t want to—he seems to want to follow the cattle.”

“Well, I’ve had more excitement here in the last half-hour than any man is entitled to. When my horse fell I thought that whole bunch of cattle was going to run over me, and I’ve been jumping around here as hard as I could, trying to keep them off.”

“I hope you didn’t get hurt when your horse fell with you?”

“No,” said Jack, “I must have hit a soft spot. I’m all right, but I’d like to get back to camp, so as to start out with the boys when it gets light, and try to find the cattle.”

“I want to find camp, too,” replied Donald; “but I don’t know whether I can. My horse doesn’t seem to want to go that way.”

“Do you know in which direction camp is?”

“Yes; it’s off that way,” Donald answered, pointing.

“I’m all turned around,” admitted Jack, “and I don’t know where the camp is; but I’ll tell you what I’d do if I wanted to go to camp—I’d put my reins down on my horse’s neck and let him go in the di-

rection he wants to go. The chances are that he knows where camp is a great deal better than any of the rest of us."

"That may be true," replied Donald; "but suppose, on the other hand, he takes me off four or five miles farther away; what then?"

"Well, if you're not willing to trust him, get down, and if we can find my ant-hill again we can sit there until day comes. It certainly can't be very far off." Jack looked around the horizon. "I believe that's day coming now," he said, pointing to a place where the sky seemed a little lighter than elsewhere. "If it is, we won't have long to wait before getting our direction."

Donald dismounted, and they sat there on the ground waiting. Presently the light grew, and it was now certain that this was the dawn; so the east was found and the points of the compass were located. Gradually it grew light. As soon as they could see a short distance, the boys started back to the camp, Jack walking over the damp ground, of which he picked up a few pounds on his shoes and spurs, so that at short intervals he was obliged to stop and clean off the mud. By this time, however, it had stopped raining, and the soil began to dry. Presently, when it was good daylight, though before the sun had risen, they met half a dozen men from the camp, starting out to look for the cattle.

McIntyre heard Jack's story with a broad grin; but he frowned as he thought of the cattle scattered, no one knew where.

"Did you see anything of Jack Mason?" he asked.

"No," answered Jack; "nothing. Two or three

times as I was pushing in to turn the cattle, I thought I heard somebody yell behind me, but I could not be sure, for I was making all the noise I could myself."

"Well," said McIntyre, as he turned his horse, "go in and get something to eat and fresh horses, and then come on. It may take us a long time to gather those cattle, or maybe Mason has 'em wound up somewhere now."

The cowboys rode off, and Jack and Donald were soon in camp eating breakfast. Jack's slicker in his fall had been split from neck to skirt and until mended would be useless. Hugh, who with the cook and horse wrangler had remained in the camp, saw it, and told Jack to leave it with him, and he would sew up the tear. "It won't be of much use," he commented, "in real rainy weather, but it'll keep you dry in a drizzle."

Hugh had smiled at Jack's story of his attempts to dodge the stampeding cattle, and had told him that he was mighty lucky to have got off as he did.

A little later, Jack and Donald, mounted on fresh horses, rode out to take the trail of the stampeded cattle, but they had gone only a short distance, when from the top of a hill they saw, far off, a bunch of cattle coming.

One of the first men they saw when they met the herd was Jack Mason, and the two young men rode up beside him to ask an account of his adventures, and to relate their own.

"I was following along not far behind you, Jack," said Mason. "You were advertising your place by shooting and hollering, and I was trying hard to get up to you, to try to help push over the lead cattle

and get 'em turned. All of a sudden, though, your light seemed to go out. There were no more shots and no more yells, and I made up my mind something had happened to put you out of business. Before very long I got up to the leaders and managed to crowd 'em over and over until at last I got 'em running in a circle, and then before long, of course, the circle got smaller and smaller until they all got packed together and then they had to stop. They didn't get very far beyond where you left 'em, not more than a mile and a half, I should think, and I didn't have any trouble holding 'em there until daylight; and soon after that the boys came up, and here we are again. But what happened to you? I suppose your horse fell, because he was with the cattle when day come. One of the boys has got him there now."

Jack told again of his fall, and as before the story was laughed at and he was congratulated on his escape.

"Well," said McIntyre, as the party got into camp, "we seem to be anchored to this place. We'd better move to-day. You boys go out and ride a short circle and we'll camp to-night over on Sand Creek."

That night in camp the talk was all of stampedes; there was the usual speculation as to what caused them, and all agreed that no one could tell why cattle stampeded.

Jack Mason was asked whether anything had happened to start the cattle, so far as he could see, and both he and Donald declared that they knew of nothing that could have alarmed the cattle.

"I saw something funny a number of years ago, down on the prairie," said Hugh. "I was working

for Cody and North, on the Dismal River, and one time when we were taking some beeves into town south of the range, near Cottonwood Creek, these beeves stampeded. It was a bright moonlight night, and you could see quite a long way. I had been riding around the beeves and had stopped my horse and was sitting quiet on him, watching the cattle, when, suddenly, a little off to one side, I saw an antelope. He must have seen me about the same time and have wondered what I was. He trotted up pretty near me and then trotted away again, and made a circle and came around near the cattle, and when he got pretty close to 'em he whistled, and away the beeves went. It didn't take 'em half a minute to get started, and they were headed straight toward the tent and the wagon. I crowded 'em off so that they missed the wagon. They were not much frightened, and ran only a little way. I suppose they were just startled for a minute."

"I was in a beef stampede down there one time," said Tulare Joe. "These were big beeves, ready for market and we were cutting 'em out to ship. That was one of those black nights that you read about. You couldn't see anything. We had the beeves bedded down on the side of a sand-hill, one of those sand-hills that's terraced off in little benches. I never knew what started those cattle, but they started and came down the hill toward me, and I went down the hill in front of them, not knowing whether I'd get out alive or not. The way their horns hit together sounded like a company of cavalry firing their pistols. When we got down on the flat, the cattle passed Jim Lawson and me, and we chased 'em down the valley for sev-

eral miles, but finally we lost 'em all. Later we gathered 'em — most of 'em at least. When we were rounding up the country down on the middle Loup, we kept finding these cattle for three or four days. We got 'em to the railroad at last."

"There was another stampede, and a queer one, at the Dismal Ranch," Hugh said. "A big bunch of yearlings stampeded in a corral. I never understood how it was, for I wasn't there when they started, but was coming down toward the ranch. Of course we had never thought of cattle stampeding in the corral, and it happened that there were no horses up; most of 'em were in a little pasture close to the house. The corral was cut into four small pens and next to the outside fence there was a gate in the wall of each pen, opening into the next pen. These gates were open, and you'd think that if the cattle had stampeded in the corral they'd all have run around one way, but instead of that these yearlings must have split in two bodies, and one part run around the corral one way, and one the other. Then they must have met and piled up there, and the result was that they broke out two panels of the fence — great strong cedar posts and poles. Some of 'em went over the fence, but most of 'em went through, and the fence was at least seven feet high.

"I was going down to the ranch and was about a mile away when I heard them start, and when I got down to the corral they were just going over and through the fence. I followed 'em, and Buck and Bax Taylor came on as soon as they could get horses. Those yearlings ran all night. Two or three times we got 'em together and turned 'em until they'd stand

still, and then they'd keep perfectly quiet. For about fifteen minutes after they'd stopped they were so quiet that you couldn't hear a sound; you couldn't hear 'em breathe; and then they'd begin to step out a little to get room, until they were pretty well spread out. They'd stand still listening and not making a move; and then, all of a sudden, off they'd go again. We lost about a hundred out of the bunch, but got 'em later on another round-up. Several were killed going over the fence, and two or three broke their legs, and there was about a wagon load of horns on the ground there."

"That antelope story of yours is a pretty good one, Hugh, but I've got another," spoke up Tom Smith. "I was on herd one bright moonlight night and the cattle were all lying down. I'd been riding about 'em and had stopped for a little time, and was sitting still on my horse. I was about half asleep, with my face to the cattle, and my horse must have gone altogether asleep. He must have been asleep, because he fell on his knees, and when he fell the saddle-flaps squeaked. That started the cattle. They jumped up and ran; but they didn't go far. I don't think they really stampeded — they were just startled, not scared."

"I reckon everybody was kind o' surprised that time," chuckled Hugh.

"I know I was," admitted Tom.

"I don't call that stampede by the antelope, nor the one Tom just spoke about, a real stampede," said Joe; "but that stampede of the yearlings, and the one we had last night, were sure enough the real thing."

"Yes," said Hugh, "those yearlings were scared

for keeps. That bunch had just come over the trail from Texas, and the animals were tired and thin. They'd just come in and hadn't been branded. I never would have supposed that they could have stampeded, but they were scared; and they were always afraid of that corral. We never got that bunch into that corral afterward. We had to rope most of 'em out on the flat, and brand 'em that way. It was awful slow work, and before we got through we tried separating 'em into little bunches of forty or fifty, and these little bunches we could get into the corral."

"Wasn't it dark last night?" remarked Donald. "I do not remember ever to have seen a blacker night."

"I guess so," said Joe. "We've all of us been out on some of those black nights when you just can't see anything. Some nights maybe you think it's just as dark as it can possibly get, and then all at once it gets so much darker that you think it hadn't been at all dark before. On some of those nights you can see the electricity on your horse, a sort of blue light running up from your horse's ears and then maybe a little blue flame running down the back of his neck toward your saddle. I never saw cattle run in that kind of weather; though you'd think they would.

"I remember one night of that kind. We were holding the cattle, but it was blowing and raining some, and the herd was drifting along behind us, like it did night before last. There were several of us in front of the cattle; we could hear each other when we called, but we couldn't see each other, nor anything else. There was some lightning — very bright.

I had just turned my horse to look back and try to see by the lightning flashes if any of the cattle were slipping by us and getting away, when all at once the lightning struck right in the middle of the bunch. There was about seventeen hundred head of 'em, and for a second it was just like day and I saw the whole bunch. I saw the bolt fall. It seemed to me that the whole middle was knocked out of the herd. I thought I saw two hundred head of cattle drop. They fell in every direction. The cattle didn't run, but that lightning killed seven head.

"After the storm had passed, we turned the cattle and drove 'em back to a bed ground, close to where they'd started from."

"Well, I've been handling cattle for a good while," said McIntyre, "and I've no idea what makes cattle stampede. Anything may cause one, and then again there are times when you couldn't stampede a bunch if you tried."

CHAPTER XIX

COW HORSES AND THEIR WORK

THE next day they were cutting again. Donald was active and tried to help, though he accomplished but little because he lacked real knowledge of the work. But if he did not himself do much, he at least saw many things done.

Of these one of the most interesting was Vicente's handling of a fighting steer. Charley Powell had cut out and was trying to drive the animal, but it stopped to fight. It would not move but stood and faced the horse and rider. Presently Vicente came up and, after a word or two with Charley, rode around behind the steer while Charley ran his horse close by the animal's head to try to make it charge. On his second dash by it the steer put down its head and rushed after the horse, but before it had made half a dozen jumps Vicente's rope had passed over its horns. He wound the rope around his saddle-horn and as he drew the rein his horse set its forelegs and braced itself in real picture-book fashion; the rope tightened and the steer turned a somersault and slammed down on the earth with tremendous force. Vicente sprang from the saddle, leaving the little horse bearing back with all its weight against the rope to hold the steer, ran forward to the animal and in a moment, as it seemed, had hog-tied it. It was then left on the

prairie to think the matter over, while Vicente and Charley Powell went off to their work.

That night about the fire, Donald could not say enough in praise of the work of the cow horses and their seeming understanding of what was required of them; and the others assented to his enthusiastic declaration that a well-broken cow horse is interesting to watch and shows great intelligence in doing its part of the work of handling the cattle. Joe and Vicente, however, said little, but at length in response to some direct appeal Joe said:

“Well, boys, there’s no denying that these horses know a heap, and that some of ’em do their work mighty well. I expect if it wasn’t for the horses there wouldn’t be any cattle business; but honest, and without wanting to blow off my country or any other country, you ought to see the horses in the South, whether it’s southern California, or Texas. I think maybe they’re not always as strong as the mountain horses up here, but they’re a whole lot quicker. What’s more, it seems to me they understand their work better and do it better; and if that’s so, here’s one reason for it: The cattle down there are different — at least they used to be in old times, and I reckon they are yet. Most of you know what an old-fashioned Texas long-horn is: mostly head, horns and legs — light, quick on his feet, and a great hand to dodge. Now those Texas horses, and the southern California horses too, have been broke to handle these cattle; and to be any good they’ve got to be fast, quick to turn and ready to meet any move the steer makes. Up here, you’ve got a great deal better class of cattle: they’re heavier and make better beef, and

that means that they're slower — more like barnyard cattle. They don't handle themselves anything like what those Texans do. Texas cattle put the horse and his rider more on their mettle than these grade cattle. They call for greater quickness and readiness; and though I am a Wyoming cowboy now, I'm bound to say that the best cow hands I've ever seen have been down in the South and Southwest."

"I guess that's gospel," Hugh said. "I saw something of the cattle business down on the plains when the cattle business was fairly new there, and when all the cattle came up over the trail from Texas, and they certainly did have good cow horses down there. As Joe says, they were quicker, and readier, as it seems to me, than the horses we have up here. Of course that don't mean that they were better horses, but I suppose it does mean that the Texas horses had been, as you might say, just raised on cattle. For generations that was all that they'd been doing and they were quick as a cat on their feet. It's always seemed to me that these mountain horses are much more awkward."

"I've never seen those Texas horses," said Powell; "but I didn't suppose that they were nearly as strong as our horses here; and I didn't suppose that they could hold cattle nearly as well."

"No," replied Joe, "they aren't as strong as these horses, but for any work like cutting, where you need quickness, they can handle themselves mighty well."

"Not all those horses," explained Vicente, "make good cow horses. Some quick, some slow. But good horse, the more you ride him the better he do his work. Seems to learn things."

“They used to tell about a wonderful cow horse they had down on the North Platte a few years ago,” said Hugh. “I heard about him one time from some punchers I saw in North Platte City, when I was coming west two or three years ago. They said he belonged to the Bosler outfit. Maybe you’ve seen him, Joe?”

“Oh, well,” answered Joe, “if you’re going to talk about Old Blue, I don’t believe there ever was a horse to be compared with him. He was in a class by himself. In those days he was known all through western Nebraska and eastern Wyoming. I guess he was the most noted cow horse there ever was in that country. He was a Texas horse and, I always heard, came up with one of the drives. I don’t suppose there was ever a horse like him in all this northern country. I saw him many times and I happened to be along on one of the round-ups when he did something that was talked of for years and maybe is talked of yet down in that country; I mean the time he cut out a steer all by his lonesome.

“Old Blue belonged to George Bosler, who was an active cow man and rode the horse as one of his string. I reckon Bosler was prouder of that horse than of anything else he had, and he never got tired of telling about the horse and how much it knew and what it could do.

“You know Buffalo Bill had an interest in a bunch of cattle up north of the Platte; CN was the brand. Cody and North owned the cattle and they had places up on the Dismal River.”

“Hold on,” interrupted Hugh; “you can’t tell me about that! I used to work up there.”

“Is that so?” said Joe. “That must have been before I worked up at Bratt’s.

“Well, Cody was along with us on one of the round-ups, and Bosler was telling him all about Old Blue, and among other things he said that Blue knew the Bosler brand. Of course, Cody laughed at him and so I guess did most everybody else; but George Bosler said he’d prove it, and he’d prove it by riding his horse into the bunch and cutting out an animal without a bridle on his horse, so that he couldn’t guide it. Well, everybody thought he must be drunk when he said that. But he just got on his horse and rode into the bunch of cattle, and as he rode in among them, he reached forward and pulled the bridle off his horse. The horse walked around among the cattle, looking at them with his ears pricked forward, as though hunting for something, and pretty soon he pointed his nose toward a big Texas steer and began to push him out to the edge of the bunch. You’ll hardly believe it, but that steer had the Bosler brand on him!

“The steer did not want to go out of the bunch and kept trying to break back, and the horse had a hard time to keep him going; but he kept right after him, and did succeed in working him out to the edge of the bunch, and all this without any guidance at all by the man, except what Bosler may have given with his knees. It was a wonderful sight, and by the time the steer was out of the bunch ’most all the men had stopped their work and were watching.

“But this wasn’t a patch on what came afterward. When the horse got the steer outside, the steer turned to fight; and the two stood facing each other. The steer wanted to get back among the cattle; the horse

wanted to drive him over to the Bosler bunch. All the time the steer was threatening with his horns, and the horse kept moving around from side to side to keep in front of the steer and yet not let it hook him.

“They maneuvered that way for quite a little while, and then, all of a sudden when the horse saw his chance, he made a big jump—twenty feet clear, I believe—and got his breast right against the steer’s neck in such a position that the steer could not hook him. Then he began to push the steer over toward the other bunch of cattle, where he wanted to take it. The steer did not want to go, and braced itself; and the horse just pushed. It was fearful hard work. He would push and push and push as far as he could, until he was tired out; then he’d stand and rest for a few minutes, while the sweat dropped down; and then he’d begin pushing the steer again, until finally he pushed him to the edge of the other bunch of cattle. All the time the steer was trying to twist around so as to use his horns, but the horse worked it so that he never got touched.

“Long before this, all the round-up work had stopped, and all the men—I guess there must have been two hundred and fifty of ’em—were watching the horse and wondering at him. I reckon the oldest cow man there had never seen anything like that before.

“After he’d got the steer over to the edge of the other bunch and where he wanted it, of course Old Blue had to figure out some way to get away from the steer without getting hurt. We were all wondering how he’d do it, and before long we could see him getting ready, and could figure on what he was going to do. He began to draw his hind feet up under him like a cat,

and at last, giving the steer a great push, he wheeled on his hind feet and made a long spring — and struck the ground running. The steer went for him, but did not come near catching him.

“That cow horse was in a class by himself. I never saw another like him, and I’ve seen thousands of cow horses, in Texas and California and up in this country.”

“That’s a wonderful story, Joe,” exclaimed Donald; “almost beyond belief if you hadn’t seen it yourself.”

“Well,” said Joe, “it’s a story about a wonderful horse.”

“What sort of horse was he, Joe?” asked Jack. “Was he a big horse — a half-breed?”

“No; he was a small Texas horse. I suppose he’d weigh eight hundred and fifty or nine hundred pounds. He didn’t seem to have any special breeding; but his head showed a lot of intelligence.”

“Nobody could tell, I suppose,” Powell remarked, “whether this was a horse of very great natural intelligence, or whether he’d been ridden by a man of superior intelligence.”

“No,” said Joe; “I reckon that would be all guesswork. It might have been both. At all events he was a natural wonder.”

“What finally became of him?” asked Jack.

“I don’t know. When I left there the Boslers were still running cattle, and George Bosler owned Old Blue. The horse got to be so well known after a while that plenty of men wanted to buy him; but of course Bosler wouldn’t sell him. At that time you could buy a first-class cow horse in that country for fifty dollars, but I heard that a man named Sheedy came to Bosler and

offered him a check for a thousand dollars for Old Blue. But Bosler just told him that he had no price to put on the horse; he wasn't for sale."

"Were there any more horses like that down in that country?" asked Jack.

"No," said Joe, "I don't believe there was one. Good horses were plenty, but nothing that you could talk of in the same day with Old Blue. As I tell you, he was in a class by himself, and anybody that ever saw him work or knew about him would tell you the same thing. A man named Carter owned a horse — a white horse — that was said to be the second-best horse in that round-up; but he wasn't in the same class with Bosler's horse. He was a good horse and did his work well, but he couldn't be talked of with Blue. Then, up on Cody and North's ranch on the Dismal, they had an awful good horse — a short-coupled, strong dun horse that Cody sent out once after he had lost one of the ranch horses. The horse was branded JO on the left shoulder and they used to call him Old Joe. Likely you remember him, Hugh?"

"Sure," said Hugh. "He was a good horse and there wasn't much to choose between him and Carter's white horse. They were way ahead of the ordinary cow horses."

"There's one thing you don't want to forget," put in McIntyre, "and that's what Joe said a while ago. Down in that country at that time, if I understand it, there were lots more cattle than we've ever had up here, and because all these cattle were from Texas and were wild, active and quick, they had to have quick horses down there. I've heard men that have worked down there — men that came from up in this country

I mean — say that in those days their horses weren't as good for cutting as the Texas horse. They were more awkward and lots slower."

"Well," said Hugh, "it's good economy for a cattleman to have the best cow horses he can get, and practically all the horses that they used down in that prairie country came up over the trail from Texas. Why on the Cody and North ranch they used to buy forty or fifty horses every year; the poorest ones were culled out and sold and then the next year another lot bought. It always seemed odd to me that so few Mexicans came up over the trail with all those cattle that came. The country down there was full of Texas cowboys, but mighty few of 'em were Mexicans. I suppose the fact that a good many of 'em could not speak English had something to do with it, and possibly in some places people did not like 'em; though I never saw anything like that except where a man was mean or had something bad about him. Pretty much all the Mexicans that I've had to do with were as loyal and faithful as white men — good workers. We've got a couple with us now and we all know what they are."

"Yes," assented McIntyre, "they make the best kind of hands; but we don't see very many of 'em in this country. I'd like it if we saw more."

For a little time nothing was said.

"Was the cattle business new in this northern country when you were down in Nebraska, Hugh?" Jack asked presently.

"It wasn't what you could call new, son, but on the other hand it hadn't been going very long. The country wasn't overstocked, and the cow men were careful and worked hard. They made lots of money."

“Do you know when it was, Hugh, that cattle first came into the country north of the Platte?”

“Well, it’s hard to tell. I believe that there were cattle north of the Platte in 1867. I guess likely they were Keith’s cattle, but I’m not sure. They were Texas cattle.”

“And in those days,” asked Donald, “was there much game in that Nebraska country?”

“Yes,” said Hugh, “a good deal. Lots of antelope and deer, a good many elk and a few buffalo. I never happened to see any buffalo just there, but I saw signs of ’em more than once.”

“Why, when I was working down there,” said Joe, “there were still quite a lot of elk. I remember once seeing Buck Taylor come in to the CN ranch dragging a big cow elk after him. I don’t remember where they caught her, but I do remember how she looked when she came. Buck was snaking her along by the neck, and somebody had put a rope on one of her hind feet, and she was dragging that. I remember, too, hearing that one of the Oliffes roped an elk one time, but somehow or other he couldn’t handle him, and I believe he had to shoot him to get the rope off him.”

“Yes,” repeated Hugh, “there was plenty of game there then, and quite a little fur. Old Jim Carson used to make a living by trapping. Then in those days there were still a few wild horses in the country. I don’t mean strays that had got away, but real wild horses, such as we used to have in old times, thirty or forty years ago.”

“Is it possible!” exclaimed Donald. “I’d like to see them.”

“Well,” responded Hugh, “you can see pretty

nearly the same thing, only about a hundred per cent. better, any time you come across a bunch of range horses on the prairie. These wild horses were of no account. They looked as pretty as a picture when they were fat and slick, but a number of 'em, were caught, and not one of 'em was good for anything. I chased a bunch once for six or eight miles, and came near killing a good horse after 'em, and didn't get one. I'll bet the horse I was riding was worth more than the whole bunch I was chasing. The romance of the wild horse is a good deal like the romance of the cowboy's life: there's nothin' to it."

CHAPTER XX

ROPING A BEAR

THE round-up was drawing to its close. Most of the country to be ridden had already been covered and, as Joe said, scraped of cattle as if they had gone over it with a fine-tooth comb. McIntyre was an excellent cow man, and besides keeping his men up to their work he himself had covered much ground and had satisfied himself that his crew had been faithful and thorough. Most of the cattle had been sent off in bunches to their home ranges, and now only one day more of riding was to be done, over a rolling country among the foothills of the low mountains.

On this last day, Jack, Donald, Vicente and Tulare Joe were covering a stretch of country among the foothills. The ground was open, and so rolling that the riders could see one another only occasionally, yet still could keep track of one another's movements pretty well. Donald, who still occupied the position of pupil, though he had made good progress, rode pretty close to Jack and was often within hailing distance of him. There were not many cattle here, and only a few had been gathered, which Donald was driving along, trying to keep up with the other riders and yet not to hurry his cattle.

As Jack rode up toward the crest of a ridge rather higher than most of the hogbacks coming down from

the hills, he looked off to the west and saw something that made him rein in his horse. A rider, too far off to be recognized, but whom he knew must be Vicente, was riding in a circle and at the same time signaling with his hat.

Jack knew, of course, that this was a call to him to come, and he started at once; on his way picking up Donald, whom he told to leave his cattle and to come over to Vicente. Before they reached him, Joe had joined Vicente, and the two waited for Jack and Donald.

When the four had got together, Vicente motioned toward the ridge before them.

“Big bear over this hill; suppose we try catch him.”

“Whoop!” cried Jack. “That will be more fun than a goat! But have we got the ropes to tie him, if we do catch him?”

“I guess we can make out,” said Joe. “Vicente and me have our macates, and if we can get him fairly stretched, they ought to do for his hind legs and his mouth. If we can catch him close to some timber there’ll be no trouble to tie him up, but if we get him in the flat country where there’s nothing to tie him to, we’re liable to kill him. I’ve heard how they used to catch bears in California, but I never saw it done myself, though I’ve heard the story over and over again. Maybe Vicente has seen it done. How’s that, Vicente?”

“Yes,” grinned Vicente, “in my country, sometimes they catch it bear—make him fight bull. Suppose we had big rawhide here; no trouble to catch it bear and take him to camp.”

“You two fellows will have to tell Donald and me

what to do," said Jack. "We are green at this sort of thing; but if you will tell us, we will do the best we can — eh, Donald?"

The young Englishman's eyes snapped as he nodded.

"Well," decided Joe, "I reckon the best thing to do is to charge the bear together. I think that Vicente has the best horse and will get to him first. Then, if he can catch him by the neck, I'll try to pick up one or both of his hind feet, and then you two fellows will have to do the rest. The main thing, of course, is to keep him from getting one of the ropes in his mouth, for if he does that he'll just naturally chew it off and we'll be short a man."

"But," asked Donald, "will these horses go up so close to a bear that you can rope it?"

"I know that Vicente's will," answered Joe; "Vicente makes his horses go wherever he wants them to; and I expect that my horse will be all right, and so will Jack's. I don't know about yours, Donald. Guess it will depend a great deal on its rider. Now before we get ready to charge the bear, we must tighten our saddles, and see that everything is in good shape; we don't want to have a saddle slip after we get our ropes on the bear. Might be kind of unhandy for a man to be left afoot there."

The boys dismounted, loosened their cinches, pulled forward the blankets, tightened the cinches again, saw to it that their ropes were well arranged, and then everything was ready. Vicente turned his horse and rode toward the ridge, and the others followed a little behind him.

Presently Vicente took off his hat, checked his horse and, letting it go forward only a step or two at a time,

scanned the country before him. After a few moments it was evident that he saw something. He bent low and backed his horse down the slope, rode a few hundred yards nearer to the higher hills on the right and then stopped.

“Bear pretty close now; just over ridge.”

He started on a gallop toward the crest of the hill; the others followed only a little behind him; and in a moment all of them were sweeping down the gentle slope toward a great brown animal, which for a moment stood on its hind legs looking at them. Almost at once it dropped on all fours and raced off at great speed across the flat and toward another ridge on which grew a few gnarled and stunted cedars.

The horses were now going at their best gait, down the slope, across the dry wash near which the bear had been standing, and over the level flat on the other side. Vicente's horse had put on a burst of speed that astonished the other boys. It was rapidly overhauling the bear, and by the time it had gone about three-quarters of the way up on the opposite slope Vicente was swinging his rope. In a moment he threw forward his hand and, checking his horse, the bear turned a somersault and struck the ground with a sound heard by all of them. For a moment the animal lay still, apparently stunned by the shock, and then, springing to its feet, it charged furiously down the hill toward Vicente, whose horse still stood there motionless. Jack saw Vicente coolly shortening the rope, and then the little horse made a sidewise rush and again the bear flew head over heels. At that moment Tulare Joe caught the hind feet; and the bear, notwithstanding its great strength, was fairly stretched out between the two

little horses, which were almost sitting down on the ground in their resistance to the pull of the two ropes.

There was little time for observation. Quick action was needed now; action which would render the bear powerless and would enable Vicente to free the rope which was about the bear's neck and would soon choke it to death.

“Try to catch the right fore leg, and I'll catch the left!” Jack called to Donald; and riding close to the bear he caught the left foot, and backing his horse away put a heavy pull on it. Donald had failed to catch the bear's right fore foot, and was slowly recovering his rope. He looked as if he did not know what to do. Meanwhile, the bear was throwing its right fore leg up over its head and hooking it in Vicente's rope in the effort to free its head, and Jack feared lest the long claws might cut the rope or fray it so that it would break. If the bear's head and one fore leg were free, it would be a difficult matter to hold it, for it would readily cut the rope that held the left fore leg. Vicente recognized this danger before any one, and every time the bear hooked its right leg over the rope, Vicente slacked up a little, so that the bear's leg and foot slipped off the rope, and as soon as this happened Vicente quickly backed his horse away, until the rope was taut again.

Seeing to it that his own rope was securely fastened to his saddle-horn, Jack tumbled off his horse, and ran swiftly around by the bear's head, jumped over Vicente's rope and came to the bear's right side. He had beckoned to Donald, who rode up close to him. Seizing the loop of Donald's rope, he waited until the bear's foot was free, threw a small loop over it and told

Donald to make the rope fast to the saddle-horn and back away strongly. Donald was riding a good cow horse, but it was evidently afraid of a bear and objected strongly to coming close to this one. However, its rider at last drove it up close enough to get his hands on the rope, and when the horse found that it was holding something, it seemed to gain confidence. Though snorting and uneasy, with pricked ears, it nevertheless remained quite still and held the right fore leg so that the bear could not move it.

“There!” cried Jack, “I guess we have got him!”

All this had been done in a very short time. While it was happening, Tulare Joe had left his horse and run around to the bear’s head, and now with Jack’s assistance he made a sort of hackamore of his macate and, binding the loose ends firmly around the bear’s jaws, turned to Vicente and threw up his hand. Vicente at once slacked up on his rope and Joe loosened it. It had cut deep into the bear’s neck.

For a moment or two the bear lay motionless. Donald supposed it was dead until Joe, stepping around to one side, pressed his foot heavily on the animal’s chest close behind the outstretched fore leg and the air from the lungs came whistling through the bear’s mouth and nostrils. A moment later the animal gasped for breath, and after two or three intervals began to breathe regularly, and then to struggle. It threw its head violently from side to side, and its little eyes snapped with fury, while it uttered muffled grunts and groans. The boys stood near its head watching its efforts to free itself from the ropes. It could move only its head which it threw from side to side and up and down, beating it against the ground in its impotent efforts.

“Hadn’t we better get on our horses?” suggested Donald. “Suppose one of these ropes breaks, or a horse yields a little.”

“No danger,” said Joe; “the ropes and the horses are all right.”

Vicente sat on his horse looking down at the bear.

“Pretty soon he goin’ die.”

“Why will he die?” asked Jack. “What’s going to kill him?”

“He get pretty mad,” answered Vicente. “So mad can’t live any longer. You see.”

The words were scarcely out of Vicente’s mouth, when the bear gave a great bawl and then lay still, except for a few convulsive quivers. As Vicente had foretold, he had died of rage. The boys watched him closely, and gradually they saw his eyes grow dull.

“Well,” said Jack, “I’m sorry that the old fellow died. It seems as if it would have been better for him to have been killed by a bullet than to die in this way.”

“Yes,” responded Donald, “it does seem sort of an ignominious death to be caught and stretched out on the prairie like this, perfectly helpless. On the other hand, if he had ever gotten a wipe at one of our horses with those paws of his, I am afraid that there would not have been much left of the horse.”

“We may as well get our ropes back again,” said Joe, “and go ahead about our business. Do you boys want to take off the hide? It’ll make a pretty good robe for one of you.”

“I should like very much to have it, if nobody else wants it,” said Donald. “How do you feel about it, Jack?”

“Why,” replied Jack, “if you want it, you had

better have it, and Joe and me here will help you take the hide off. It's no joke to skin a bear. It takes a long time and is hard work, and you get covered with grease while you're doing it. However, we may as well pitch in and get it out of the way."

"Well," drawled Vicente; "me, I goin' off to look for cattle; when you get ready, suppose you come along."

"All right," answered Jack. "It won't take us very long. We will put the hide on Donald's horse, and then Joe and I will hurry on to catch up with you."

Nevertheless, it was nearly an hour before the hide was freed from the carcass and done up in as compact a bundle as possible; and then ten or fifteen minutes more had to be devoted to the work of getting it on Donald's horse, for the animal wholly objected to the smell of the load. At last, however, the work was completed and Donald mounted; but no sooner had the blind been lifted from the horse's eyes than it began to pitch, and so furiously and long that the boys feared that Donald might be thrown and hurt. They threw their ropes over the horse's head, and called to Donald to dismount. He did not greatly care to do this, but finally did so, and the boys advised him to turn about and go home, leading his horse at least for a mile or two before attempting to mount it. They would go on and finish their circle, and would then come around to the camp.

Before he began his walk to camp Donald saw the other boys mount their horses and ride off over the hills. As soon as he started, his horse began to make trouble for him. It began by bucking hard at the end of the rope, and Donald was somewhat uneasy lest either

the strings which bound the hide on the horse's back should stretch, or come loose, or else the saddle should shift. In this case he would lose his hide, for once on the ground it was not likely that one man could tie it on the horse again. Fortunately, everything held, for Tulare Joe before leaving him had carefully gone over all the fastenings. Even after the horse had ceased bucking, it was very uneasy, looking back at its load and trying to bolt, or occasionally swerving from side to side and dragging Donald about on the end of the rope. He had not had sufficient experience with a rope to understand how to hold a horse effectively, and sometimes he was dragged along, with arms outstretched, for a number of yards over the prairie, before the horse yielded to the pull of the rope. A man of greater experience would readily have stopped the horse in a number of its rushes by throwing his right hand behind his hip and then leaning back against the rope, but Donald had not yet learned how to do this and during his long walk back to camp he suffered much discomfort because of his lack of knowledge.

Two or three times he thought that he would mount his horse; but each time the beast threatened trouble, so that Donald feared he might lose his bear skin off the saddle; and now, since he had worked so hard to save it, he was determined that he would take no risks about it. It occurred to him also that if his horse should get away from him and should run to camp and in among the *cávaya*, the loose horses would be certain to stampede, and might be scattered far over the prairie. It seemed better to walk the whole way than to take a risk such as this.

So he kept walking; and it was a hot, dirty and weary

young Englishman who at length reached the camp. He tied his rope short to a wagon wheel and took the bear skin from his horse, and then unsaddled and turned loose the animal.

It was some hours later when Vicente, Jack and Tulare Joe reached camp with a small bunch of cattle.

CHAPTER XXI

A CALIFORNIA BEAR HUNT

THAT evening in camp Jack and Donald were full of the exploits of the day—the roping and death of the bear.

“What I can’t understand yet,” said Donald, “is why that bear died. Vicente said that it died because it was so mad; and certainly we know that it died, and without being hurt, except so far as it was choked before we got it stretched out. Did you ever hear of anything of that kind, Hugh? I suppose you know more about bears than anybody in the camp.”

“Well,” replied Hugh, “of course, I’ve seen bears in my time, and seen some of ’em killed, but I don’t know anything more about whether they’ll die of anger than you do. I expect the only men that can tell you much about that are Vicente here and Joe. I’ve heard more than once something about grizzly bears dying because they were mad; but I don’t know anything about it.”

“Come on, Joe,” laughed Jack, “we’ve got to go back to you Californians now for information. California is the only place I ever heard of where they regularly roped grizzlies, and I suppose it’s a long time since they did much of that.”

“Yes,” answered Joe; “it’s a long time ago. The big California grizzlies had got to be mighty scarce long

before I learned how to throw a rope; but here's Vicente — he's seen it done, for he told me so to-day. And I've heard a man, who did it before I was born, tell a story of what he himself had seen in California in early days."

"Well, I reckon we'll have to squeeze a story or two out of you and Vicente to-night," said Hugh; "but first I'd like to hear what you know, or have heard, about bears dying of anger."

"I know just about as much about it as any of the rest of us here," responded Joe. "It used to be common talk out in California that bears would die of anger; and the one we saw to-day certainly acted that way. At the same time, I don't suppose all bears are alike in their temper or feelings any more than all men are alike."

"I should say not," declared Hugh; "and that's what I've been trying to tell the people for a good many years. Men say that deer, or antelope, or coyotes, or jack-rabbits, always act in a certain way, under certain circumstances; but I don't believe a word of it. There's just as much difference in antelope and coyotes and jack-rabbits as there is in horses and cattle and dogs. Some are fast, others slow; some gentle, others wild; some are cross, others friendly; in other words, all the animals of a certain kind are not exactly alike, and don't all act alike."

"I guess everybody believes that, Hugh," said Powell, "if he stops to think of it, but the trouble with most of us is that we don't stop to think."

"That's sure what's the matter with most of the people in this country," replied Hugh; "they don't stop to think. They've got sense enough, if they'd only

think. Well, Joe, tell us your story, the one you heard; or let's hear the one Vicente has to tell."

"I'll give you mine easy enough," said Joe. "It happened just about the time I was born, I suppose in the late '50s, and near a place called San Pascual. It seems that bears had been making trouble killing colts, and the men at the ranch made up their minds that they'd try to get 'em, or some of 'em; and if they got a bear, they'd take it to one of the towns near by and have a bear fight by fastening the bear and a bull together. Just about that time one of the men came in and reported another colt killed, and its mother badly scratched up; so two or three of the men, one of whom was supposed to know everything about bears, went out and looked the ground over to decide what to do. Finally they killed the old crippled mare on a low flat piece of prairie a mile wide and about three miles long and then took her paunch and dragged it, making a circuit of about ten miles, and finally came back to the carcass. They found in the trails the tracks of an old bear and three big cubs, and saw that they were traveling around pretty much all the time. When the men dragged the paunch they crossed a good many of these trails.

"While this was being done, other men went out and drove in the horses, and the best broken ones were picked out for those who were going to ride after the bear. Of course every man looked after his saddle. If any of the latigo strings, or any of the strings of the saddle or the bridle were worn a little, they were taken off and new strings put there. It wouldn't do to have anything break when they were going to try for a bear.

“The next morning early a man was sent out to go to the bait, and to where the paunch had been dragged, so as to learn if the bears had found it. He came back soon, and said it looked as if there had been a thousand bears going over the trail where the paunch had been dragged. He said that they had eaten considerable of the old mare.

“The men who were the leaders — the bear sharps — said the bears would come back that night, and that all hands ought to be within earshot of the bait by moonrise. So by dark all the horses were saddled, and about ten o'clock the head man called the outfit and led 'em down toward the bait. Before they got anywhere near it, they could hear the coyotes yelping on the hills all around the bait, and they knew that the bears were at work. If the bears had not been there the coyotes would be eating and not yelling. When they began to get near the place, they all stopped and tied up the chains and the tinklers on their spurs, so that these wouldn't be heard, and then waited for the moon to rise. After a while the moon came up over the mountains, and then very quietly they jogged along until they got between the bait and the ravine out of which the bears' trail had come the night before. Then, facing around they rode in a line toward the bait.

“The leading man had told 'em that those who couldn't rope — and that meant pretty much all the Americans in the bunch — had better stay behind and either try to catch the cubs, or else to pound 'em with their ropes and try to turn 'em. The leading man, Don Juan, was going to rope the bear, and he was to be supported by two other good ropers, both Californians.

“Well, according to the story, they got quite close

to the bait before anything happened, and then an enormous bear stood up and looked at 'em. The man who told me said that she looked to him as tall as a pine tree; but I guess he wasn't used to seeing bears. At all events, even if she did have her cubs with her, she put out across the flat making for a big cañon that was quite a long way off.

“Don Juan and his partners kept after her and before very long caught up and Don Juan put his rope around her neck. But before he knew it she threw it off, and he had to slow down a little to gather his rope. Another man drew up to try to rope her, but the bear gave a snort that scared his horse so that it ran away. Finally the third man got up to her and, roping her with a big loop, caught her around the neck and behind her shoulder, and the rope stayed. She turned and charged on three legs, one of her fore legs being held close to her neck, but she never arrived, for Don Juan came up at that moment and caught both hind feet and in a minute she was handsomely stretched. Garcia, the man who had been on the frightened horse now came up. Taking his macate to hold his horse with, he went up to Don Juan, who in the meantime had ridden up within ten feet of the bear's hind legs, shortening his rope all the time, and so leaving about twenty feet behind the horn of the saddle. He passed this end to Garcia, who was now on foot, and Garcia, passing the end of the rope through the loop that was about the bear's neck and front foot, carried the end back to Don Juan and helped him hold the bear's hind legs, while he took up the slack of the rope that had been passed through the neck loop. When this was done and he

got a pull on the rope, the bear's hind feet came close up to its neck, and it was in kind of a ball.

"They'd provided themselves with strings and ropes, and now that the bear was helpless her mouth was tied up, and then the three men, putting their ropes on her, dragged her to a tree, and, after a good deal of work and fussing around, got one hind foot on either side of the tree trunk, and tied the two together on the other side. The bear's hind feet were thus useless to her. She could walk around on her fore feet and dig holes in the ground with 'em, but it was impossible for her to get at the lashing which held her hind feet.

"All the other ropes were then taken off and she was left there for the night.

"Meantime, the cubs had been attacked by the Americans, and after a whole lot of excitement all the three were captured and tied up.

"The next morning they got fresh horses and all went back there and carried a beef hide with them. You heard Vicente say yesterday that if we had a beef hide we could take the bear to camp, didn't you, Jack?"

"Yes; I heard him say that, but I didn't know what he meant."

"Well," said Joe, "you'll know if you'll listen to this story.

"When they got to the bear, Don Juan made a rough measurement of the distance there'd be between the two front feet and the two hind feet of the bear if she was lying stretched out on the ground, and then in the beef hide he cut holes at different points.

"Now strong ropes, wound with sheep skin to

keep the ropes from cutting her, were put around the bear's fore feet and hind feet. The beef hide was moved up close to her head, the ropes attached to the fore feet were passed through the holes in the fore part of the beef hide, and the bear was slid forward on to the hide and the ropes drawn tight. Then the ropes on the hind legs were passed through the holes cut at the back end of the beef hide and drawn tight and there lay the old bear, stretched out flat with the beef hide under her and firmly attached to it. They say it made the white men who had just come into the country stare to see the way the Californians handled the ropes and the bear.

“When the bear was fixed there to the hide, another rope was fastened to the head of the beef hide; and then with three men ahead, each with a turn of one of the ropes around his saddle-horn, and two men behind to keep the hide properly stretched, the outfit set out for the ranch.

“The cubs were tied up and packed on horses, and the whole family, except one cub that had died, successfully taken to the house.

“The next day, after they had put another hide under the bear, they hauled her down along the road to the town. They say that they had lots of fun on the way down, for every ox-team and burro train that they met on the road, just as soon as it got a smell of the bear, started from the road and took to the open country.

“There in the town they got a bull and brought the bear into the corral and fastened bull and bear together by a long chain and then turned both animals loose. Of course, it don't seem to have been

half fair to the bear, for she had been tied up for a couple of days and must have been fearfully stiff. However, she was ready to fight. But it was pretty short; the bull managed to stick his horns through her after a little bit, and killed her."

Jack drew a long breath.

"Gee, wouldn't I like to have been there!" he exclaimed.

"They certainly were handy with the rope in those days," said Hugh.

"Yes," replied Joe; "they were. Vicente was telling me to-day about his uncle's catching a bear and tying it up all alone. It seemed to me a pretty good story. I don't believe you can understand more than half of it if he tries to tell it in English. Suppose I get him to tell it to me in Spanish, and tell you just what he says."

"Bully!" responded McIntyre; "that'll make it a whole lot plainer."

For a moment Joe and Vicente spoke together in Spanish, and then Joe turned to the others.

"All right," he said; "here goes:

"It seems that Vicente's uncle was riding through some thick willows in a wet place on a ranch in California, when suddenly he felt his horse stagger and heard the sound of a slap. He knew that a bear had hit at him and missed him, and hit the horse, and the horse went flying out of the willows into the open grass with the bear charging at his heels. His uncle slowed down a little and let the bear get pretty close, bending off toward a low, stout willow that grew alone. When he got nearly up to it he dodged a little to one side, stopped his horse, and as the bear passed, roped

him by one hind leg and, riding half a dozen times around this willow, drew the bear up close to the tree. Of course, the bear was biting at his hind foot all the time, trying to get rid of the rope. Vicente's uncle tied the end of the rope to an outside limb; then riding up close to the bear in front — of course it was making desperate efforts to get at the man — he threw his hair rope over the bear's neck, fastened it to his saddle-horn and backed his horse off so as to hold the bear. Then the man got off his horse, took off his silk sash, went around behind the bear which was held by the horse, and tied his hind legs together behind the tree. That was all there was to it."

"Gosh, that was enough!" exclaimed Jack Mason. "We don't know anything about what those old fellows used to do with horses and cattle and bears."

"That's so," drawled Vicente. "In those times they often sent out a man alone to kill and butcher a steer and bring it in to camp. Pretty dangerous, all of it; but the vaquero must not be afraid."

CHAPTER XXII

HUNTING WITH A SIX-SHOOTER

THE round-up was over and the representatives of the various brands had started off in different directions toward their home ranches, taking with them the few cattle that had been gathered during these last days. With the Sturgis party went also Jack Mason, whom McIntyre had engaged only for the round-up, and who was beginning to get uneasy and to long to resume his wandering life. When he paid him off, McIntyre said to Mason that he would be glad to have him work on the ranch for the rest of the season, and even hinted that he would give him a job for the winter, but to these proposals Mason shook his head, laughingly, and declared that his steady job had lasted long enough and that now he was going to make a little trip.

There were thus five men in the party that was traveling toward Swift Water Ranch. They had about fifty head of cattle and twenty-five horses to drive. The distance was short, the weather fine, and they expected to reach the ranch in three or four days, at the most.

The morning after the round-up outfits had separated, they started in good season, traveling up a broad open valley between the mountains, where in many places the grass stood well above the horses' knees.

As they drove along, antelope were constantly seen ahead of them, which, though not shy, always moved off ahead, or ran up the open side valleys which at short intervals emptied into the main one.

“Son,” Hugh said to Jack, who was riding near him, “why don’t you and Donald go ahead and try to kill a buck antelope with your pistols? I’m getting hungry for a piece of wild meat. I’ve had so much beef lately that it seems to me I can pretty near feel my horns sprouting;” and he rubbed his hand over the side of his head. “The buck antelope ought to be in pretty fair order now, and I don’t know why you shouldn’t be able to get up pretty close to ’em, if you work along close to the side of the valley, and see the antelope before they see you. They’re great fellows, you know, to climb up and lie where they can look out over the country. If you had rifles you’d be sure to get a shot or two. I don’t know what kind of a pistol shot you are. Most of us can’t do much with these short guns, though Major Frank North, down in Nebraska, could kill game as well with a pistol as I could with a rifle. Many a time I’ve seen him kill deer and antelope at a hundred yards, what we’d think was a good rifle shot, and he was using just an ordinary revolver.”

“That’s a good idea, Hugh. We’ll do it. I’d like to give Donald a chance. He hasn’t had any show yet to hunt, and I expect that’s what he came out here for.”

“Is it?” inquired Hugh. “I haven’t seen him carry a rifle, and I didn’t know what he was out here for.”

“Well,” Jack admitted, “I don’t know either; it’s

just my guess that maybe he came out to have a hunt."

"Then take him along. You're not needed here, and I certainly would like to have some wild meat hung up in camp."

Jack asked Donald if he wanted to go and see whether they could kill an antelope with their pistols, and there was no doubt about Donald's readiness; so it was not long before the two young fellows, riding out well to one side of the little herd, galloped off up the valley and, waving to Rube as they passed, were soon out of sight behind a point of the hills.

When they were well beyond sight or sound of the herd, Jack drew in his horse and, turning toward the edge of the valley, repeated to Donald what Hugh had said.

"What we want to do," Jack went on, "is to keep as close as we can to the edge of the valley and watch the ground ahead for antelope. Along toward the middle of the morning they're likely to get up pretty high and to lie down where they can have a good look over the open land. If we can see one lying down, or can see one working toward a place where it looks as if he might lie down, we may be able to get right close to him. Now, I've used a pistol mighty little, and I don't feel at all sure that I can hit anything with it. Have you ever used a pistol much?"

"In past years in England, and in New York, I have done some shooting with a pistol at a target, but of course I have never shot at game; and I fancy that to shoot at game is very different from shooting at a target, in a quiet place with all the lights arranged just so."

“Yes,” laughed Jack, “I should think it would be; but if you know how to shoot a pistol, you’ll have to do your best to kill the game. I tell you, if we come in to-night without anything, I shall lay it up against you.”

“I’ll do what I can,” Donald promised, “if you will take me up close enough to get a fair shot. You see in the shooting-galleries the distances are short, scarcely ever over twenty yards; and what is more, the people there shoot with special pistols, and often with special ammunition. So if I flunk on killing game, you can see I will have plenty of excuses. Besides that, I don’t know anything about this pistol — it’s a new one I’ve just bought, and I can’t tell anything about how it’s going to shoot.”

The hills which bordered the valley on either side were low, but rough, rocky ledges often thrust themselves out to the valley’s edge, and from these ledges great pink or reddish rocks, occasionally worn into queer shapes, had fallen. Sometimes around such a great rock was a little tangle of underbrush — cherry, currant and raspberries — while sometimes there was no brush and the yellow grass grew close about the rocks. It was up here on the higher land that Jack hoped to find antelope lying down, and, under cover of rocks and brush and the inequalities of the ground, to be able to get close enough to kill one with a pistol.

As they rode on, it became clear that Hugh had sent them to a good hunting place for antelope. Groups of these animals, or sometimes old bucks feeding singly, could be seen every few hundred yards for a long distance ahead. Some of the bucks seemed to carry **extraordinarily** large horns, which would

make fine trophies to hang on the wall, and both Jack and Donald regretted that they did not have their rifles.

Donald, whose experience in hunting was much less than Jack's, was anxious to try to approach the first bunch of antelope they saw; but Jack pointed out to him that this could not be done, because there was little or no cover. He explained further that if they started the antelope running along this valley, they would put every animal there on the alert, and their hunting later in the day would be just so much the more difficult.

"If we ride along close to the rocks here," he said, "the antelope will pay little attention to us. Some of them will stand and look, and perhaps walk off a little way, but when they see us go on about our business they will begin to feed again. Along toward the middle of the day, if we keep our eyes well open, we are pretty sure to find some of these big bucks lying down close to the hills, and then we'll give you a chance to see what you can do with your six-shooter."

"All right," agreed Donald; "all right; you're the hunter, and I am perfectly willing to follow along behind and do what you tell me to."

"Oh, it's not that. But I've had more experience than you, and I know better than you what animals will do under certain circumstances. Why," Jack laughed, "don't I remember the first antelope I ever killed! How crazy I was to get up to it, and how I fell down two or three times on the way to the top of the hill, and how I finally scared the antelope out of the country! I believe that was one of the best

lessons in hunting I ever learned. I made such a complete fool of myself, that I even saw it myself, and it humbled me and made me ask Hugh to put me on the right road, and to keep me traveling there."

Donald was interested in all hunting matters, and he was anxious to have Jack tell him the whole story of that hunt in detail. Somewhat reluctantly, Jack told him something of his adventures during his first visit to his uncle's ranch, when he was known as "Jack, the Young Ranchman."

As the boys rode up the valley, new vistas of its yellow surface and of the side ravines that came into it were constantly opening up, and distant animals were often seen which Donald could not always identify, and which he took for deer, or elk, or even cattle. Jack assured him, however, that they were all antelope.

"How do you know?" Donald asked. "Now there's a beast far off that looks black, and looks as if it had big horns. How do you know that that's an antelope?"

"I can't tell you how I know, but I do know that it's an antelope. You say it looks black; well, so it does, but on the other hand, look where the sun is, and you'll see that the reason it looks black is because the part of it that we see is mostly in the shadow, while everything around about is in that bright sunlight. You say it looks as if it had big horns, and I'll acknowledge that it does—but look at it now. Can you see its horns?"

"No," said Donald; "it seems to have lost its horns."

"It has to our eyes," explained Jack, "because it

has turned its head, and we don't see the horns from the point of view that we did before. It would be hard for me to say positively that any of those things were not elk or cattle, but I'm dead sure that they are all antelope, because at this time of the day there would not be any elk in this place; that's one thing; another thing is, if they were cattle they would look different. They would be squarer, broader, heavier. Hold on there! Bend down slow, and slip off your horse!"

In a moment the boys were on the ground.

"Did you see him?" Jack whispered.

"No," answered Donald; "I didn't see anything."

"Why, there's a big buck antelope lying there, not seventy-five yards away, and he didn't see us either. I believe we can crawl up close enough to get a shot. Look here, you said just now that you didn't know your pistol, and didn't know how you could shoot with it. Do you want to take mine? I can tell you how it shoots, but I don't know that that'll do much good. If you can get near enough to the buck and can find a place to rest the pistol, you had better shoot at him from a rest."

"Well, how are we going to get near him?" asked Donald. "I don't know where he is. You will have to crawl up to him, and when you get to the right place, call me up and I'll shoot."

"I think we can get up to him all right," said Jack. "He's lying up on a little bench, and I believe we can crawl along under the bank right close to him. The only danger is that he'll see you when you rise to shoot; and I suppose if you have to shoot at him on the run, you'll miss him."

“I’m sure I shall; but let’s try, anyhow.”

They threw down the reins of their horses, and turning toward the valley crept very carefully down into a little sag. Jack pointed ahead to where a great rock showed sixty or seventy yards away.

“He’s lying right at the foot of that rock; between us and it. Now, we’ll have to crawl along this low place, sticking as flat to the ground as we know how, and then when we get within thirty or forty yards, you lift up your head and find him and kill him, if you can. If you miss him, I may take a pop at him; but I’m certain I shan’t hit him when he’s running. But, say,” he cautioned in a whisper, “don’t you take your pistol out of your holster until you get ready to shoot, and I won’t take mine out either. I’m afraid that if we have them in our hands we might kill each other instead of the antelope.”

“All right,” agreed Donald.

Jack threw off his hat and Donald did the same, and the boys crept along very cautiously and slowly. As they advanced, the top of the rock seemed to come nearer and nearer, and at length they were quite close to it. Presently Jack stopped, looked back and motioned with his hand for Donald to creep up beside him.

“Now you go up very slowly on your knees,” he whispered, “and try to find him. Remember that the first thing you will see is his black horns sticking up. If you see them close together, his head will be turned out toward the valley; if you see them wide spread he’ll be looking straight in our direction. Wait, if you can, until he looks out toward the valley, and then rise and shoot. You’ll have to shoot pretty

quickly, for he's almost certain to see us. Raise your head very slowly."

Donald gathered his legs under him and very slowly rose to his knees, at the same time feeling for his six-shooter. Gradually as his head rose higher and higher, his hand went around to his hip; but when he was standing on his knees it was evident that he saw nothing. He looked at Jack, who motioned with his hand toward the rock, and Donald crept forward a little way up the bank. This time when he raised his head, he saw the animal. He drew his pistol and noiselessly cocked it, waited a moment and then, raising his head and hand slowly, he fired.

Jack was on his knees behind Donald and had his pistol ready, but nothing stirred.

"You must have got him!" Jack cried.

The boys quickly jumped to their feet and climbed up the bank, and there was the antelope, his head stretched out before him.

"Let's get a knife into him!" exclaimed Jack. "He may be only creased."

A few steps brought the boys to him, and taking hold of the antelope's horn Jack thrust in his knife at the point of the breast. Then he saw that the ball had entered just below the head and had broken the antelope's neck.

"By Jove!" he cried, "that was a good shot, and a quick shot! If that wasn't an accident, it was certainly a way up shot. I'd give a good deal to be able to shoot a pistol like that three times out of five."

"It was a lucky shot, sure enough," laughed Donald. "I can't do that sort of thing three times out

of five, nor three times out of ten. I wish I could."

"Well, we'll have to have some pistol practise when we get back to the ranch, for if you can do this thing often, I'll want you to give me some lessons."

The boys dressed the antelope, which was a fine old buck with a pair of long, spreading horns.

"This will tickle Hugh," said Jack, "for it's just what he asked for — a good piece of wild meat."

They left the antelope where it lay, and riding out a short distance from the hills so that they could see the whole valley, they took the saddles and bridles from their horses and let them feed while they sat there and talked until the slow traveling herd had come almost to where they were. Then they saddled up again, went back to the antelope, and putting it on Donald's horse rode down and joined the others.

CHAPTER XXIII

A LOAD OF MEAT

THE sun was hanging low in the western sky on the evening of the second day after this when the little bunch of stock, having entered the home valley and crossed the streams which ran down from the low mountains back of the ranch, approached the corner of the pasture and saw the lake. The low ranch buildings were still hidden behind the hills, but all the surroundings were those of home. The cattle were left by the lake to mingle with the others that within the past few weeks had been brought to the home range, but the men drove the horses along, intending to turn them into the big pasture until it had been determined what saddle animals should be kept up. Most of them, however, would be turned out, and would do no more work until the beef round-up a couple of months later.

There was no especial work for any one to do, and Hugh asked Jack why he and Donald did not ride on to the house and see Mr. Sturgis. When this was suggested Donald said he would be very glad to do so.

"I have not said anything to you about it, Jack, but I have a letter of introduction to Mr. Sturgis from my uncle, who is an old friend of his. I think that they were in college together, a good many years ago."

“Well,” said Jack, “you’ll like Uncle Will all right, I know. If you don’t, you’ll be different from most of the other people in this country. Of course I like him because he’s my uncle, and perhaps you might say Hugh likes him because he works for him, but I think you’ll find that most people on the range and at the railroad think a good deal of him. I once overheard a man say to another: ‘What I like about that man Sturgis is that he don’t put on any airs; he’s just as common as you and me.’ That sounds a little queer, of course, because back East when anybody speaks of another person as common, it has a bad sound; but I reckon out here they use the word in a sense that maybe we have forgotten.”

The boys started ahead, and turning the corner of the pasture fence they galloped along toward the house which they could now see. No one seemed to be stirring, until they were near enough to the blacksmith shop to hear the ringing of hammer on anvil, and for the hoof-beats of their horses to be heard in the shop. Then Joe, with a hammer in one hand and a pair of tongs in the other, looked out of the door, and on recognizing Jack shouted a greeting and waved his tools. The boys drew up by the corral fence and tied their horses, and then, having shaken hands with Joe, went up to the house to see Mr. Sturgis. He was found writing in the sitting-room, and welcomed the boys cordially. When he had read Donald’s letter he gave him an extra handshake and told him that he must stay there as long as he would. Donald’s arrival had not been altogether a surprise to Mr. Sturgis, for among the mail waiting at the ranch were two or three letters for the young Englishman,

as well as for Jack; and after the first greetings were over the two boys retired to read their mail.

Among Jack's was a letter from Sam Williams, saying that he was in Cheyenne and had succeeded in getting work; that he had left the horse and saddle at Brown's livery stable, as promised, and that when Jack was ready, he would be glad to have him send him the fifteen dollars still due him on the saddle and bridle. Jack felt that he must inquire about this at once, and see that Williams got his money as soon as possible.

When the reading of the letters was over, Mr. Sturgis looked up from his writing.

"Jack," he said, "Hugh told me about the trouble over at Powell's the day you started away from here, and a few days ago when Joe was in town, Brown told him that some weeks before a man had left at his stable that gray horse and a saddle and bridle which were to come out to you here. Joe brought them out. He brought out Donald's trunk on the same trip."

"Yes, Uncle Will; I have a letter here from the young fellow who left the things at Brown's, saying that he had done so. I owe him some money on that saddle, and must see that it goes to him the next time anybody goes to town."

"Yes," said Mr. Sturgis, "don't neglect that. If you really owe money, pay it as quickly as you can. How do you mean to send it to the man? I can give you a check, of course, but that may not be the most convenient way for him."

"No," replied Jack, "I guess it wouldn't be. It should be sent either in currency in a registered let-

ter, or by post-office order. I suppose a money order would be the safest."

"I think so too, but of course it is a little more trouble. However, I think I would send it in that way. You would not care to have to pay the money twice. Speak to me about it the next time any one goes to town. I think perhaps somebody will have to go before very long."

"There come the horses, Uncle Will," said Jack. "Don't you want to go out and look at them? They're all in first-class shape, it seems to me, considering the work that they have had to do; but between now and the fall round-up they'll fatten up and be in splendid shape for that."

They walked down to the barn and saw the horses turned into the corral, and Mr. Sturgis shook hands with Mason, whom until now he had never met. The loads taken off the horses were dropped in front of the bunk-house, for Jack and Donald had agreed that they would stop down there; they would not sleep at the house. To this Mr. Sturgis at first demurred a little, but assented when the boys had given him their reasons.

For two or three days now nothing seemed to happen at the ranch. The saddle horses were turned into the big pasture, and the men who had just come in from the round-up camp loafed about the house, reading or talking, or sleeping. Very likely they were all a little tired from their long hard work and enjoyed the days of idleness; but that could not last. Their lives had been too active for them to settle down into doing nothing. Therefore, when Mrs. Carter announced one day at breakfast that the supply of fresh

meat was running low, Mr. Sturgis with a smile asked Jack and Donald whether they wished to go out and kill a load of meat, or whether he should send out and have a beef driven in.

The boys declared that they would make the hunt; and up on the mountain back of the house, where the elk had their summer home, seemed the only place to go. To be sure, there was a bunch of antelope over in the big pasture, and a few mule deer lived in some of the ravines running down from the hills; but Mr. Sturgis liked to see these animals near the house and had requested his own people and their neighbors not to disturb either the deer or the antelope.

Jack and Donald agreed therefore that the next morning they would climb the mountain and try to find an elk; and when Jack Mason heard of it, he said that he wanted to go along, if his job should be only to lead the pack horse. He was already tired of loafing.

Mr. Sturgis had decided to send Hugh to town the next day, and that evening Jack arranged with him to get a money order to send to Williams at Cheyenne.

Soon after breakfast the following morning, the three started on their hunt. To Jack the trail up the mountain was familiar enough, for he had known it now since small boyhood. To the others it was new and full of interest; and Donald, especially, looked down with great interest and curiosity into the deep, narrow and dark ravines above which the trail ran.

Suddenly Jack, who was in the lead, held up his hand, and then slowly slipped off his horse on the upper side and came quietly back to Donald and Mason.

“There are five bull elk,” he said, “down here in this ravine, just a little ahead of us. I don’t think we want to kill them, but you might like to see them, Donald. I don’t know if you ever saw elk at this time of the year, just when their horns are half grown. It’s interesting to see them go through the thick timber, and to notice how careful they are to keep from knocking their horns against the trunks and branches among which they travel. Of course, the horns are very tender at this season, and the animals take the greatest care not to hit them against anything.”

“I’d greatly like to see them, Jack. Can we get a look at them?”

“Yes; slip off your horse, and we can go forward on foot and get a look at them, I think. They were moving when I saw them, but I don’t think they saw me.”

“Well,” said Mason, “I’ll stay back, and bring the horses on up to your horse, Jack.”

“All right,” answered Jack; and he and Donald went forward. They had passed Jack’s horse only about twenty feet, when Jack stopped and pointed, and in a moment Donald could see the yellow bodies of the elk showing up in the shadow as they walked along the ravine.

“Shan’t we kill one?” whispered Donald after a moment.

“It doesn’t seem worth while. These fellows are growing their horns now, and they’ll be poor enough for a month longer. You know, those horns grow about as fast as corn, and they’re a terrible drain on the animal. On the other hand, just as soon as they

have got their growth, and begin to harden, the bull elk lay on fat in a way to astonish anybody, and by the end of August, or first of September, they are fit to kill — hog fat. Besides that, even if these elk were in good order now, we don't want to finish our hunt at the very beginning of the day, and then have to go back to the ranch and stay around there until night. If we keep on we can very likely find a yearling or a two-year-old heifer that will make us good meat and be worth bringing back."

For some time the boys watched the elk's slow progress up the ravine, but at length the animals turned off into a side ravine and disappeared among trees and brush and were seen no longer. Then the boys went back to their horses, remounted and rode on up the trail.

After a time they came up out of the ravine into a narrow grassy valley with little groves of quaking aspen and bordered on either side by high ridges of weathered pink granite. Here the slope was gradual, until at the head of the valley they reached a rolling plateau, with aspens here and there, and farther off higher hills, crowned by pines. The country they were entering was singularly picturesque. Donald was greatly impressed, while the apparently practical Jack Mason declared that it was as pretty a hunting country as he'd ever seen.

Everywhere in the bare soil of the plateau which showed among the tufts of grass, already beginning to turn yellow, were seen the traces of elk. Some of the tracks had been made in the spring when the soil was wet; they had sunk deep in the soft mud, and showed the imprints of the dew-claws. Other

much later footprints had been made on dry earth, but were dull, windworn, and covered with dust; while occasionally were seen tracks fresh and glistening, made by animals which had passed along only a short time before.

“There are certainly plenty of elk here,” remarked Jack Mason to the other Jack.

“Lots of them,” was the reply. “Of course I don’t claim to know much about the whole West, but I have never been in any place where elk seemed as plentiful as they are here. We may ride on to some at any time, and for the present we don’t need to hunt, because whenever we want to kill something we can do it.”

It was only a little later that Jack’s prediction was verified. As they rode across the opening of a little valley they saw, less than two hundred yards away, several cow elk and heifers feeding at the edge of the brush near the timber.

“There,” said Jack, “what did I tell you?”

“There they are,” returned Jack Mason; “sure enough.”

Donald began to show some excitement.

“Shouldn’t we go up there and try to kill them?” he asked eagerly.

“I think not,” answered Jack. “We can get what we need going home. I think it will be better fun for us to ride on a little, and then climb up on some high peak and sit there and look over the country.”

“All right,” said Donald, resignedly; “go ahead; but I’d like to remind you of the story about the girl who was sent into the woods to get a straight stick, and kept rejecting pretty good sticks, hoping to get

one still straighter, until finally, when she got to the outside she had to take one that was crooked."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Mason. "That's the way I've seen it done often with hunters. But let's follow Jack, Donald. He's the boss, and if we don't get any meat, we'll put the blame on him, and make lots of fun of him when we get back to the ranch."

"Let it be so," acquiesced Donald.

Jack Danvers grinned.

"I'll accept it," he said.

For three quarters of an hour they rode on, constantly ascending by a gentle slope. Two or three times they saw other elk near or far off, and more than once Jack was warned by Donald of the humiliation of being laughed at when they got back to the ranch. But Jack only laughed and intimated that Donald was a British pilgrim.

At last Jack dismounted at a little grove of pine timber, at the foot of a rocky hill, steep and broken.

"Let's stop here," he said, "and climb up to the top of this hill and see what there is to look at. When we get up there, Donald can soothe his feelings with the British pipe he carries and the rest of us will study the landscape."

The horses were tied, and a short scramble brought the men to the sharp peak of the hill — a rocky needle standing up several hundred feet above the plateau. From this summit was had a wide view which really justified Jack. To the south and east they looked out over the basin where the ranch was, though the distance was so great that there was no detail. Behind them, to the north and west, was a stretch of plateau broken by groves and lines of pines and aspens,

and in the little parks among this timber were a number of animals, most of them elk, though there were some antelope. On the plateau between the basin from which they had come and the pinnacle on which they stood, in many little parks and openings were elk and in one of the larger parks a herd of antelope.

"Why," exclaimed Jack Mason, "this is a regular elk pasture! It seems to me the elk are thicker here than the cattle on the prairie, where we passed along only a few days ago."

"Well," replied Jack, "there are a great many elk up here, and very few people come here to hunt them. A few of the ranch people round about, when they need fresh meat, come here and kill it, and that is all the hunting that is done here. But I'm afraid the place is getting talked about. I heard last year of three or four settlers from down in Colorado who came up to the Hole, where most of the elk winter, and loaded up their wagons with their winter's meat. If three or four people from Colorado did that last year, it's likely that a dozen or twenty will do it this year, and two or three times that number the year after. If they do that, that will be the end of the elk here; and I guess they'll do it."

The boys sat there for an hour or two looking over this lovely mountain prospect, and then Jack Danvers stood up.

"Well, I really hate to do it," he said, "but I suppose we've got to go down and kill something, and take it back to the ranch."

They climbed down the steep hill and untied their horses.

“Now,” Jack cautioned the boys, “we ought to go more carefully. Donald, I expect you’d like to kill an elk, wouldn’t you?”

“You bet I would!”

“All right then; let’s go on and do it.”

On the return they took a valley a little to the west of the one they had followed up, and it was not very long before Jack halted and called a council.

“Now it seems to me that just beyond this point of timber we saw from the hill a little bunch of elk, and among them there’s likely to be the animal we want—a fat yearling. I don’t suppose there’ll be any trouble in getting up to it—not half as much as there’d be in getting up to a range cow on foot—but let’s go on. We can ride until we see the elk, and then get off to shoot.”

They entered the green timber in single file, Jack in the lead and Jack Mason bringing up the rear with the pack animal. It was all very simple. Before they reached the edge of the timber on the other side, Jack, who had been looking carefully, stopped and craned his neck to one side and then slipped off his horse and beckoned to Donald.

Very quietly the two proceeded on foot, and before they reached the edge of the timber Jack pointed out to Donald two or three elk lying near the opening, but he motioned to him to wait before shooting. After a little study Jack fixed on a fat yearling that lay slightly apart from the others, and told Donald to shoot it behind the shoulder and low down. When the shot rang out all the elk sprang to their feet, except the one Donald had hit. This one partly raised itself and then lay down again, and after a mo-



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Photo. by the Morris Art Studio, Chinook, Mont.

ment put its head on the ground. The other elk stood about looking. The boys went back for their horses, and when they came out from the timber toward the dead animal, the other elk were hardly a hundred yards away and were walking up the little park without showing any alarm.

To prepare the elk's carcass for transportation to camp and to load the greater part of it on the pack horse took only a little time, and the boys went on toward home.

Jack congratulated Donald on the shot.

"It was a good one," he said, "and I believe you're an older hunter than I thought. The way you killed that antelope the other day, and this elk, makes me think that you've done a lot of hunting. Of course, I'm not much of a believer in this buck-fever that you read about in the books, but it certainly is true that when pilgrims are shooting at game for the first time, they don't always keep their heads. I reckon, though, that you've hunted more than I supposed, and I believe that you can shoot all right, and maybe can beat some of us out here who think we can shoot pretty steadily."

CHAPTER XXIV

FLAGGING AN ANTELOPE

THE days passed pleasantly and swiftly. It was not the season for killing game, and except when fresh meat was required no hunting was done. Nevertheless, there was work enough. Every day one man rode off and made a long round of the basin looking carefully for the tracks of cattle leading away from it. If fresh tracks were seen, the cattle were followed, rounded up, and driven back to the home range.

The work on a ranch is never ended. The irrigating ditches had to be looked after and the water from time to time turned on or off the hay-fields or the garden-patch. Haying time would come before long, and in that country hay was money, and worth more than a cent a pound. When no work was pressing, Jack Danvers and Donald got on their horses and rode down to the lake, and perhaps lay there on a little knoll and with their glasses watched the young ducks swimming on the lake, or the young plover, sandpipers and curlews that fed along its borders. The first two or three times the boys went down there, all the young birds hid, and the old ones made a great outcry, the curlews and plovers flying over them and whistling shrilly as if to frighten them away; but after a time the birds seemed to become accustomed to the boys and to regard them as ordinary objects of the landscape and no longer to be feared.

One of Donald's early visits to the lake resulted in a situation that gave him some discomfort and uneasiness, and cost him a pair of boots and spurs. He saw a brood of young ducks in a little cove and, intending to try to capture them, he ran into the water at the cove's mouth to cut them off from going back into the lake. Almost before he reached the edge of the water he sank so deep in the soft, soapy mire that he wished to get back to firm ground, but found that he could not stir. Jack had not seen what Donald was doing until he had almost reached the water, and then he called to him to come back. He now shouted to Donald to stand still. Then he ran back thirty or forty yards to his horse and, mounting, rode to the edge of the firm ground, and from there tossed his rope over Donald's head. Donald fixed it about his chest, close under the arms, and Jack shortened the rope and tried with his own strength to pull Donald out, but found that impossible. He was fast in the mire and, while he did not sink, he could move his legs not at all. Jack took a turn on the rope about the saddle-horn and started the horse away gradually. This pulled Donald over, but did not move his legs. Jack rode back again and got Donald's horse, and threw that rope also over Donald's head; then, stripping off his own coat, he tossed it to Donald and told him to wrap it around his chest and so to make a pad against which the ropes could draw.

Having thus put in operation the precise thing that Hugh had done for him five or six years before, Jack stood the two horses side by side and slowly led them forward. The strain on Donald was severe. The pull

bowed him forward until his trunk was parallel with the sloping beach and then suddenly, with a mighty pluck, he was drawn from the mud and thrown heavily on the ground. Jack stopped the horses, and in a moment the ropes were loosened and Donald recovered his breath. His legs were uninjured, and Jack asked him how his chest felt.

"Whew! I feel as if a grizzly bear had been hugging me, and hugging me tight! Honestly, I thought I heard my ribs crack just before I was pulled out."

"Well, it's not very good fun. I had Hugh do that precise thing to me once, when I was a little fellow, and I thought I was going to pull to pieces."

"Do you mean to say that you ever did so foolish a trick as to walk into a mud hole like that?"

Jack laughed.

"In my case it was quicksand, but the effect was the same. My feet and legs from the knees downward were gripped fast and I couldn't get out. I really don't suppose I ever came as near dying as I did that day. It was just the accident of Hugh's coming into camp at the right moment, and seeing and hearing me, that got me out of it. I think on that trip I learned a couple of lessons about doing what I was told to that I have never forgotten, and my instruction came in the shape of two huge scares. Say, you seem to have shed your foot-gear in that mud."

"Yes," Donald replied. "If they had not let go, I would probably be there still, or at least a part of me. You might have succeeded in pulling the upper part of my body away, but my feet and legs would have been down there yet."

"Well," said Jack, "there's no hope of recovering

anything from that mud. You'll have to get new shoes and spurs."

"Spurs I'll have to get, but I have shoes at the ranch."

It was two or three weeks after their elk hunt that the two boys, on being told that fresh meat was again needed, decided that they would go over to Willow Creek, twenty-five miles from home, where the Pick ranch had an old cabin, and camping there would try to kill three or four buck antelope. Donald was especially keen about that, for though in previous trips to the United States he had killed one or two antelope his experience with this curious and interesting animal was limited.

It was proposed that Jack Mason should go along. Each man would take his saddle horse and while two would ride, the third would drive the wagon, his saddle animal carrying the saddle being tied up to the hames of one of the team horses. In the wagon they would take a tent and three or four days' grub.

They started one morning in good season and were four or five miles from the ranch before the sun showed its face over the high eastern hills.

A little farther on, as Jack and Donald rode up on a low ridge, Jack saw off to the left a yearling buck antelope, distant not more than sixty or seventy yards, which gazed steadily at them. Jack pulled up and motioned to Donald to get off his horse and kill the yearling, which, notwithstanding their movements, stood looking at them. Donald gave Jack his reins and stepped behind the horses, where he threw a cartridge into his gun and fired at the antelope. At the report the yearling trotted a few steps toward

them, and Jack saw the ball strike the prairie far beyond the animal. Again Donald fired, and again the antelope advanced a few steps. Jack saw the second bullet knock up the dust far toward the hill-side.

“You’re shooting too high!” he called to Donald; “you’re seeing too much of your foresight. Draw down a good deal finer and aim at the point of his breast.”

The third time Donald shot; and this time the antelope fell.

“Where did you hold for that last shot?” asked Jack, as the two rode up to the fallen animal.

“Square for the breast,” said Donald.

“Well, if that’s the case, you must draw your sight still finer, for I believe you hit that antelope in the neck, high up.”

When they dismounted this proved to be the fact. The antelope’s neck was broken by a ball which had entered the throat only about three inches beneath the head.

“Was this antelope insane?” Donald asked Jack, as they began the work of dressing the animal. “Why did he not run away? Instead of doing that he kept coming closer at each shot.”

“That’s easily explained. In the first place, the sun was shining square in his eyes, and we were between him and the sun, therefore he could not make out what we were. Besides that, you see he’s a yearling, and it’s quite possible that he never before heard the sound of a gun. Evidently it did not scare him at all.”

“Well,” said Donald, “I’m glad to have that explained. If you had not told me how it was, I should

certainly have believed that I had killed a patient that had escaped from some antelope lunatic asylum."

"That conundrum was an easy one," laughed Jack. "One trouble with most of us is that we look at things from our own little view-point, and imagine that other creatures look at things as we do. You ought to talk to Hugh about that. He's thought more about it than anybody I ever talked to, and he's given me whatever ideas I may have."

By this time the antelope was dressed and the team had driven up close to it. The carcass was loaded in and they went on again. About eleven o'clock they crossed a little stream which was the last water they would find until they reached camp at night, and they would have a long drive of twelve or fifteen miles across a dry flat. Accordingly they stopped here, unsaddled their horses and let them drink and feed, and cooked themselves a cup of coffee. An hour later, hitching up again, and with Jack in the wagon as driver, they started on; and an hour or two before sundown reached the willow-grown bottom where their camp was to be pitched.

As Jack and Donald were unhitching the team horses, Jack Mason, who had been riding off to one side, galloped up and, dismounting and throwing down his reins, jumped into the wagon and began rapidly to throw out the beds, tent and tent-poles. Donald took the team horses down to water, and the grub box and meat were lifted out. In a moment they had picked out a place for the tent and were soon putting in the tent-poles.

"Before we unsaddle, Jack," Mason said, "you and I had better ride off to take a look at some cattle that

I see feeding on the prairie off to the north. If they should happen to be Mr. Sturgis' cattle, we ought to turn 'em back to the ranch. It seems to me I heard Rube speak the other night of seeing some tracks leading off in this direction, but somehow he lost the trail and couldn't find 'em. It may be that these are the cattle, and if there's any beef among 'em they certainly ought to be thrown back now."

"Right you are," said Jack. "Let's get the tent up and then we'll leave Donald to pack wood and water and build the fire, and we'll go off and look at the cattle."

Donald was ready to attend to the cooking so far as he could. There really was not much to do, for they had brought some bread; and all that was necessary was to cut and fry some meat, and boil the coffee. Jack suggested that Donald might skin the antelope and get the meat ready for frying. It would take the two Jacks only a short time to ride over to the cattle, but if they proved to be Sturgis' cattle they ought to be looked after. If they had located themselves up on the high bench and were likely to stay there, there was no special reason for driving them back into the Basin; on the other hand, if they were slowly traveling away from the Basin they ought to be turned back.

When the boys reached the cattle — only fifteen or eighteen head — they found that they were Sturgis' cattle, chiefly cows and young stock, but with them four or five steers, some of which would be ready for shipment that autumn. A careful look over the ground, and the discovery of a more or less worn trail where the cattle seemed for several days to have been going to water, made the men think that the animals

were not traveling, but would stay there, or thereabout, for some time.

"Well," said Jack Danvers, "I believe these cattle have stopped here. Why not leave them alone, and keep an eye on them for the day or two that we are hunting here, and then when we start back two of us can drive them along to the ranch and turn them loose down by the lake?"

"I guess that's the thing to do," agreed Jack Mason. "Meantime, if they should move away, one of us can pick up the trail and probably overtake 'em. I don't seem to remember any of these cows on the round-up, but of course they were there."

"I remember that black and white cow and her calf, and that bob-tailed bay steer over there. I think the day they were cut out was about the time you went into town to interview your friend Claib Wood."

Mason laughed.

"I just envy you fellows the fun you had out of that little argument that Claib and I had in town. I believe I've been better than a comic paper to that round-up camp, and it didn't cost 'em anything, either."

When they returned to camp they found that Donald had been busy. The beds were in the tent ready for unrolling; the antelope had been skinned and meat cut for frying; the coffee had been boiled and was standing in the ashes near the fire where it would keep hot. Donald had unsaddled his horse and turned it loose with drag-rope, and had tied the ropes of the two work horses to bunches of sage-brush.

"Bully for you!" called Jack. "This looks like business. Just as soon as we picket our horses we can have supper."

The work of picketing the horses so that they could get as much grass as possible and yet would not get tangled in one another's ropes was soon over, and before the sun had set the simple meal was finished and the dishes washed, ready for breakfast.

The night was clear and warm, with a full moon, and nothing disturbed the rest of the hunters, though as they fell asleep they heard the chorus of coyotes from the nearby hills.

It was not light the next morning when Jack Danvers heard Mason putting on his shoes, and a moment later pushing aside the flap of the tent. Jack also began to dress and in a very few minutes the two men were preparing breakfast around the dancing fire. Dawn had come and was swiftly spreading over the sky. Jack called to Donald, who groaned a response but before long appeared at the fire just in time to be saluted by Jack, who had returned from the stream with the bucket and the coffee-kettle filled with water.

After breakfast, the three rode a little way to the north, where from a high knoll they could see the cattle, placed just about as they had been the night before; and then, turning east and passing through some broken country, they came to a rolling plateau more or less interrupted by ravines, where they saw not a few antelope. Most of these were busily feeding on the higher ground and for a time the boys could see no way of approaching any of them. Finally Donald and Jack Danvers, leaving their horses, set out to crawl up a low swale which they hoped might bring them within long shot of a herd of eight or ten antelope guarded apparently by a big buck. They crawled and crawled under the hot sun, and Donald thought that he had

never been in any place where it was so hot as this. Moreover, flies — small but very hungry — buzzed about his head, and stung his neck and ears, and he seriously wondered whether the antelope they were after were worth all this effort.

They were still a long way from the game when the little water-course in which they were crawling spread out and became so shallow that it was impossible to proceed farther without being seen.

“This seems to be our finish,” Jack said, “unless you feel like shooting at them at this distance; and if I were you, I wouldn’t do it. There’s a possibility of hitting, but no more than that; and if you miss, when these antelope run, everything that sees them will be on the lookout and ready to run.”

“It isn’t likely that I could hit at this distance,” answered Donald. “I wish that they would come up nearer.”

“I’m afraid wishing won’t do you much good,” laughed Jack.

“Say, I used to read about flagging antelope. Have you ever tried it?”

“No; I never have. I guess likely they used to do it in old times, but I fancy in these days the antelope are too smart to be fooled by anything like that. To be sure, I’ve seen antelope come back to look a second time, or a third time, at something that they had seen but couldn’t make out; but I’m afraid the flagging business won’t work.”

“Well,” suggested Donald, “why not try it anyhow? If we don’t show ourselves it isn’t likely to scare them; and it’s possible that they may notice it.”

“How are you going to work it?” Jack asked.

“This red handkerchief around my neck will do for a flag. But there’s nothing to tie it to except our two guns, and if it succeeds we ought to use them for another purpose.”

“Why, here,” said Jack, “I’ll take this rod from my rifle and we can tie the flag to that.”

Jack’s rifle was fitted with tubes below the barrel and through these ran the slender steel rod which might be used to drive out a shell, if by any chance one should stick in the breech of the gun.

Jack took the rod from its place and tied Donald’s handkerchief to one end and then slowly raised it in the air and waved it in plain sight of the antelope. For a short time they did not notice it, and then an old doe faced around toward the boys and stood there looking; and in a moment all of them were looking. Presently the old doe started off on a canter to get nearer to the flag. She galloped for forty or fifty yards, then stopped and looked. Then she turned and trotted off a short distance, and turned and looked again; and then galloped up still nearer. And what this old doe did all the others did. Presently it seemed as if the buck took courage — as if perhaps he wanted to show off before his family. He galloped up to within seventy-five or eighty yards, and then, turning to the left, made as if he would circle around this strange thing that fluttered to the wind.

“Now!” whispered Jack. “He may not come any nearer. If you can, hit him when he is trotting; or, if you’ll wait for him to stop, I believe you can get him. I think I would wait; he’ll probably stop before he has gone far.”

So it turned out. Before long the buck stopped

and faced squarely around, and Donald, with the memory of the previous night's shooting in his mind, drew a very fine sight on the antelope's chest, low down, and fired. The buck reared on his hind legs and, holding his fore legs stiffly out before him, fell over backward. The does looked at him for a moment and then scurried off like so many frightened rabbits, while the boys, rising from the ground, stretched their cramped limbs and stamped about to restore the circulation.

"That was another good shot, Donald. I'd like to know how you held, and we'll see just where the ball hit."

"I drew the sight just as fine as I possibly could, and held on the very lower edge of his breast. If the ball flew as high as last night it seems to me it ought to have broken the lower part of his neck, but if I held right, and the life line is as low as I fancy you say it is, I believe that I must have hit his heart."

When they reached the buck, they found that Donald had done just that. The ball had entered an inch and a half or two inches above the lower level of the breast, and a little to one side of the breast-bone; had pierced the heart and gone entirely through the antelope.

Jack shook hands with Donald.

"A good shot!" he exclaimed. "I shouldn't be surprised if you could beat us all with the rifle."

The shot had so thoroughly bled the antelope that it was unnecessary to cut its throat, and when it was ripped up all the blood in its body seemed to have gathered in the visceral cavity.

Before the antelope was dressed Jack Mason came up with their horses.

“My!” he exclaimed, bending over and resting on the saddle-horn as he watched the boys at work, “that’s a fine head. You don’t often see one like that. Why don’t you take it, Donald, and carry it back to the old country to ornament the walls of your baronial hall?”

“I believe I will, Mason,” said Donald; “and when I get it hung on those walls, I’ll invite you and Claib Wood to come over and give us your little barroom act. We can have lots of Western color in the village where I live, with just a few of the properties.”

Mason laughed.

“I believe it would have been better if I’d killed Claib,” he said. “You fellow’s wouldn’t have so much to josh about then.”

The two following days spent at this camp resulted in the capture of three more buck antelope, and the next morning camp was broken and the wagon started back to the basin. Donald drove, while Jack Mason and Jack Danvers rode well out on the prairie and rounded up all the cattle they could see and drove them slowly toward the ranch. In the early part of the day the cattle were slow to move, but after the sun got hotter and more directly overhead they seemed to work along better, and shortly after noon had the appearance of really striking out after water, which, of course, in due time they found.

At the place where the road crossed the water Donald had stopped, unhitched his team, taken off the bridles and tied the animals out to feed; and Mason and Jack were delighted when they came in sight of the camp to see Donald fussing about the fire and to find a good meal just about ready.

A few hours later the cattle were turned loose just outside the big pasture beyond the lake, and the little hunting party rode up to the ranch, its mission accomplished.

CHAPTER XXV

THE DANCE AT THE SCHOOLHOUSE

THE weeks went by. Haying time came and all hands were busy cutting, hauling and stacking. The winter had been one of heavy snows, and water was plentiful in the irrigating ditches. Rains had been more frequent than usual that spring and summer, and in many a little meadow, too small for fencing, there was a growth of grass worth cutting. One of the labors of the summer about which the men growled bitterly was the never-ending work of keeping the range cattle away from these little unfenced pieces, in order to protect the growing grass. The cattle returned again and again to these patches of fresh green grass, and the men were forced to exercise constant vigilance to keep them off the meadows.

At last the haying was over. The stacks were all protected from the wind and carefully fenced against ravages of the range stock. Now the nights were growing shorter and cooler; sometimes there was a frost, with a skim of ice. The leaves of the aspens began to turn yellow. Down on the lake the broods of young ducks which had been reared there were gradually being added to by the arrivals of early migrants from the north. The last time Jack and Donald went out on the mountains for fresh meat for the house, they had killed a bull elk whose horns, though

still wearing the velvet, were full-grown and hard, and the animal was fat. September was at hand, and before many days Jack would be obliged to turn his face eastward and get back to college and work.

“Well, boys,” Mr. Sturgis said one morning at breakfast, “it’s about time for us to gather our beef and start it in to the railroad. We ought to find it all pretty close at home, and I hope we can begin tomorrow, and gather it and take it to the railroad in short order.”

The day was devoted to getting up the horses and preparing the wagon for the short trip, for early the next morning they were to start for a little stream twelve or fifteen miles away, where there was a corral and a good camping place. Hugh had declared that on this trip he would drive the team and would cook, and Jack, Donald, Jack Mason, Rube and Mr. Sturgis were to gather the beef.

Donald, who had become reasonably skilful with the rope and at home on a cow horse, declared that if Hugh could cook he could wrangle the horses, and that he would do that in addition to his riding. It was not likely that there would be any night herding to be done. The beeves, as they were cut out in considerable bunches, could be sent back to the ranch and held in the pasture for a short time; while the horse bunch would be likely to stay with the old bell mare that most of them knew so well.

Long before sunrise, the riders set out, traveling to the northeast, intending to ride circle of the basin and to turn in toward the camp all the cattle found. These could be turned loose again after the beef had been cut out; and possibly there would be time for another circle

to the south, when more cattle could be brought in the same night or the next morning; when again the beef would be cut out, and the cows and young stock turned loose.

Not long after the riders had gone, Hugh climbed into the wagon and, chirruping to his team, soon disappeared down the valley.

It was a fine morning for riding, and all the men felt its invigorating influence. The air was keen but dry, a light breeze just stirred the tops of the sage and the taller grass stems, and from the bushes everywhere sounded the sweet, melancholy, autumn whistle of the meadow-lark.

Few cattle were found as the riders went north, but as soon as they turned east and south they came on frequent groups, brought in not long before from the round-up. The cattle were fat and logy, and the work of pushing them along was slow, so that not nearly so much ground was covered, nor so much accomplished as had been hoped. Nevertheless, it was a respectable bunch of cattle that was driven up that afternoon near the wagon, where the work of cutting began.

Some years before, Mr. Sturgis had built near this place a large and stout corral of poles hauled from the mountains, and it was in this that the beeves were to be put and held, until enough had been brought together to drive up to the ranch.

The work of cutting went on rapidly, and before night all the steers fit to ship had been put in the corral. Then two of the men set out and drove the cows and the young stock up toward the mountains, throwing them back as far as possible on to the ground from which they had been brought that morning. This

would leave the country to be ridden the next day free from cattle until they started to make their circle and would meet an entirely new lot. The steers were to be held in the corral until morning, when two of the men would take them back to the ranch and throw them into the pasture. While that was being done — for the next twenty-four hours — there would be only three men to ride and cut, instead of five, but Hugh said that he would help.

Long before daylight the next morning, Rube and Donald set out for the ranch with the steers. The animals were hungry and thirsty. At first the work of driving them was slow, but as the sun rose and the heat increased the steers traveled faster, for most of them, knowing the range, knew also that water was to be found six or eight miles ahead, and they were anxious for water. After they had drunk, driving was again slow; but in the afternoon they reached the ranch, where with Joe's help the cattle were put in the big pasture. After a bite to eat, the men started back to the wagon, and reached it some time after dark.

Here they found that, notwithstanding the shortness of riders, another good gather of cattle had been made, and again there was a corral full of beef. These Mr. Sturgis declared might as well wait there for a day, when it was hoped that the rest of the country would be covered, the beef cut out, and the whole herd taken to the ranch, to be sent to the railroad a few days later for shipment.

So it turned out. By evening the whole Basin had been rounded up, all the beef it was desired to ship turned into the corral, and the round-up outfit was ready to start back. On the gather there had been

little that was exciting, but an abundance of hard work, although there had been no riding night herd, for which the boys were devoutly thankful.

The return to the ranch was deliberate, and it took them two days to get there. The beeves were driven a short distance in the early morning and allowed to feed and rest, and then another short drive in the afternoon completed the day's travel; but the steers were herded at night, and because of the small number of men the tours of duty were long — instead of three reliefs there was only one. However, this was for a single night only.

For two weeks the beef was left in the pasture and in this time regained whatever weight it had lost in the round-up. The men who from time to time rode into the pasture and around among the cattle were proud of their quality — it was certainly a bunch to bring joy to its owner.

At length Mr. Sturgis received word that in three days the cars for his shipment would be on the railroad siding, and the beef was started to town. The journey was unmarked by any special incident; but the herd had not been long on the road before it was learned that another bunch of beef was also on the way to the railroad and would reach there about the same time as Mr. Sturgis' cattle. This was important news, for it was not certain that the loading corrals were large enough to hold many more cattle than those in Mr. Sturgis' gather, and if the other people should by any chance get first to the railroad and occupy the corrals, the matter might be a serious one, as there was no feed for the cattle within six or eight miles of the town.

That night Mr. Sturgis asked Jack to ride over the

next morning to where the other cattle were being driven, and find out definitely whose they were, how many, and when they expected to ship. Meantime the Sturgis beeves would be driven on to the railroad; but if there should be any likelihood that for any cause the shipment would be delayed, the cattle would be turned off the road before the town was reached, and held until it was possible to see what should be done.

It was late that night when Jack returned to the camp, and as soon as he had turned out his horse he went to his uncle.

“It was a false alarm,” he reported; “the cattle that are coming are Mr. Powell’s, and there are only about one hundred of them. He has ordered cars and hopes to ship with you. He and Charley were proposing to go on to Chicago with the cattle, and to help with ours as well as theirs. That will make four or five men to the train.”

“We shall certainly be glad to have the help of those extra men,” said Mr. Sturgis. “I’ve been wondering what we were going to do. There ought to be at least four men with these cattle; and six would be better. I may have to get Rube and Mason and Hugh to go; but Hugh is getting a little bit old for work of that kind.”

“I’d like to go,” said Jack, “but I must get back, I suppose. I’ve lost too much time, as it is. I can help load, but then I must take the passenger. Another thing; I hear there is going to be a dance in town two nights from now. Charley Powell brought the news when he came out the other day, and Mrs. Powell and Bess are with the Powell outfit, going to the dance.”

“I suppose likely the whole country will be there. What do you know about the Claib Wood and Mason

trouble, Jack? Is that likely to be renewed when we get into town? I don't think Mason is likely to make any trouble; but Wood has rather a bad name. Suppose you speak to Mason about it before we get in, and I'll try to find Wood there and we'll see if we can't stop, or at least postpone, any renewal of this quarrel."

Two days later the beeves were in the loading corrals, but the promised cars had not yet made their appearance. Mr. Sturgis, knowing of old the uncertainties of railroad promises, had provided against such a contingency by arranging for a lot of hay, and the beeves were fed that night and were to be fed again the next morning. It was hoped that during the night the cars would come. Powell's cattle came in a little later than the Sturgis herd, and they also had to be fed, and fed with Mr. Sturgis' hay. The next day, if it were not possible to load, it would be necessary to drive the beeves eight or ten miles over to the banks of the Medicine Bow River and to hold them there.

Before they reached town, Jack spoke to Mason about the possibility of further trouble with Claib Wood, and Mason declared that, so far as he was concerned, he had got through with Wood, and had absolutely nothing against him.

"Of course," said Mason, "I'll be on the lookout, and if Claib tries any of his tricks on me, I'll have to be just a little bit quicker than he is; but I've no quarrel with Claib, and don't want any."

Soon after they reached town Mr. Sturgis looked up Claib, and had quite a talk with him. He was apparently fully recovered from his injuries, but the weeks that he had spent under a roof had bleached away his outdoor color and he looked pale and thin.

“I tell you, Mr. Sturgis,” said Claib, “I’ve no very good feelings toward Jack Mason, for he picked a quarrel with me, and hurt me just for meanness.”

“In one way, I suppose that’s true,” answered Mr. Sturgis; “but, on the other hand, it’s only fair for you to remember that you shot Rufe Mason without any particular provocation or quarrel, and it’s natural that Jack should remember what you had done to his brother.”

“Well,” admitted Claib, “that’s so. I never ought to have shot Rufe, and I wouldn’t have done it, only I was drunk and quarrelsome. I expect it was natural for Jack Mason to want to get even with me. I’ve had time during the last two months to do a whole lot of thinking, and I’ll say this, that if Jack Mason is willing to wipe it out, I’ll say the same and shake hands with him on it.”

“I’m mighty glad to hear you say that, Claib,” said Mr. Sturgis; “and I’ll be glad to see you two shake hands. You’re both good men, and I’d be sorry to see either killed. I feel sure that Mason is willing to call it square, if you will. The next time you see Mason, go up to him, man fashion, and tell him how you feel. I’m sure you’ll find him ready to make peace.”

Early that day people from the neighboring ranches — men, women and children — began to gather for the coming dance, and the town showed unusual excitement. Women, young girls and children passed along the streets, going from one store to another, tasting the delights of the shopping tours that came to them so infrequently. In more than one of the saloons were heard sounds of the fiddles to be played by the musicians for the dance; but the master of ceremonies, dreading lest

these musicians should become too tipsy during the day to furnish the music in the evening, had appointed a trustworthy person to go about with each one and see that he did not drink.

Soon after dark, wagons began to drive up to the schoolhouse and to unload their freight of laughing, chattering people, excited by the prospect of the dance; and a little later the frequent pounding of quick galloping hoofs told that the cowboys were gathering. Before long the rail to which the horses were tied was crowded from end to end, while their riders gathered on either side of the door, squatted on the ground and smoked their pipes and cigarettes and discussed the events of the range—the calf crop, the incidents of the round-ups, and the piece of beef.

Presently from within the building came the sound of music, and a number of the men rose to their feet, threw away their cigarettes and, with rasping shaps and clinking spurs, entered the door. In the little anteroom, each man paused to divest himself of spurs, shaps, belt and six-shooter—all these things being tied together and placed in a corner of the room.

In the ballroom the women and children sat on one side and the men, rather shamefacedly, tiptoed over to the other side and seated themselves. The costumes were those of everyday wear, though most of the men were freshly shaven. Some of them wore coats and most of them overalls, often turned up for eight or ten inches, so as to show the trousers beneath. Almost all of them wore the high-heeled cowboy boots of the period, and not one carried a weapon. The women and children were dressed in their best; some of the younger girls wore white, perhaps with a bright ribbon

tied about the neck. Eyes shone bright and faces were expectant.

The schoolhouse benches had been moved back close to the wall and the extra ones put out through the windows and piled up outside the building. At the end of the room, on a little platform where commonly the teacher sat, were the musicians. Four oil lamps on the four sides of the room gave abundant light.

Presently Jim Decker, master of ceremonies, walked over the floor holding a candle in one hand and a jack-knife in the other, shaving wax on the floor, and then trying with his foot to rub it into the wood; and at length, when his candle was exhausted and he put his knife in his pocket, a burst of music sounded from the two fiddlers and the clarionet man.

“Take your partners for the quadrille!” Decker shouted in stentorian tones.

A number of men at once crossed over, each bowing low or nodding before the lady of his choice, and asking her to dance; and in a few minutes the room was crowded with promenading couples.

It was only a moment before this that Jack and Donald, having come up from the corral where they had been feeding and watering the stock, had entered the room. Jack had told Donald about Bess Powell, and wanted him to dance with her, but they were too late for the first dance. As they lingered by the door, looking for Mrs. Powell, to whom Donald must be presented, the sets were formed and the dance began. Jim Decker was calling off the figures in a rude rhyme.

“Adams all, swing your Eves,”

was soon followed by the direction,

"Balance to your limberger cheese."

Donald nudged Jack.

"Great, isn't it?" he whispered.

Jack assented by making the Indian sign for "chief," raising the upturned forefinger high above the head and turning it downward.

A few moments later they were speaking with Mrs. Powell.

"Why didn't you get here earlier, so that you could have danced the first quadrille with Bess?" she said to Jack. "She hoped you would ask her."

"Why, Mrs. Powell," he explained, "we were down at the corral feeding and watering and only just got here. Mr. Donald and I both want some dances with Bess."

"She'll be glad to dance," was the response; "but you'll have to wait a while."

The dancers were enjoying themselves greatly. Though the men largely outnumbered the women, there were at first some girls without partners. The novelty of the surroundings struck terror to the hearts of some of the most daring riders and ropers, and kept them glued to their seats. Buck Wilson, Twenty-One Johnson, and Red Casey of the Bar Lazy A, whose feats in broncho busting and roping had made them famous on the range, felt their courage ooze away when it came to facing a girl and asking her to dance. Their bashfulness was added to by the shouts of Jim Decker and other older men, who tried to induce them to pluck up heart and choose partners for the dance.

One by one timid men, who had not yet dared to come into the ballroom, slipped through the door and, apparently trying to make themselves as small as pos-

sible, sidled over to seats on the men's side, and sat down to look on.

Most of those who danced did so with real feeling and great spirit. One or two men were extremely expert in cutting pigeonwings, and jumping high in the air; and some of them stamped in time to the music, so that the air was full of dust. Most of the men, however, were extremely quiet. At the end of each dance, the men took the girls to their seats and, leaving them, either retired to their side of the room or slipped out of the door to smoke a cigarette or talk with those who had not yet dared to venture into the room.

About midnight came supper — pies, cakes and lemonade. Before this, Jack had had two dances with Bess and Donald three, and Jack had also succeeded in persuading Mrs. Powell to walk with him through a quadrille.

It was at the dance that Jack Mason and Claib met. Claib had come in while Mason was dancing, and had seated himself to look on. As soon as Mason left his partner, he walked directly over to Claib.

“Well, Claib, how goes it?” he asked cheerily.

“All right now, Jack; and I'd like to shake hands with you, and call by-gones by-gones.”

“That'll suit me to death, Claib,” said Mason, giving his former enemy a hearty handshake.

A little later, Mr. Sturgis appeared in the ballroom. He shook hands with Mrs. Powell and Bess and then looked about for the faces of his own outfit. When he saw Mason, he told him that the cars had arrived, and that he wanted all hands down to begin to load by daylight, and asked him to tell the others.

Daylight had come before the dance ended, but when

it broke up the Sturgis outfit were down in the loading corrals, hard at work getting the steers into the cars as fast as they could.

And the next morning Jack's heart-strings were stretched when he shook hands with his friends and took the passenger for the Atlantic coast.

THE END

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Jack, the young
cowboy

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